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**The Role of Individual, Product and Channel Characteristics in  
Brand Switching Behaviour**

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy in Industrial and Business Studies

University of Warwick, Department of Business  
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### DECLARATION

This is to declare that this thesis is the candidates' own work.

## **ABSTRACT**

In consumer research, variety-seeking has been recognised as a major cause of exploratory purchase behaviour and specifically brand switching. A major contribution from Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) examines the circumstances under which brand switching occurs as a result of the internal need for variety isolating other external factors (such as out-of-stock conditions and promotional activities) which also motivate brand switching. The authors' theoretical model proposes that the occurrence of brand switching is a function of two factors; individuals difference characteristics and product characteristics.

The present thesis proposes that in today's retailing environment, with the proliferation in shopping channels, the increase in non-store retailing and the rise of the Internet, a third factor that of the 'channel' is likely to influence brand switching behaviour. A 'channel' factor is added to the original model of Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) and it is posited that channel characteristics (e.g. channel involvement, channel perceived risk, channel loyalty channel similarity and hedonism in channels) as well as the individual difference characteristics and product characteristics (proposed in the original model) will have an influence on brand switching behaviour.

The new framework is tested in the context of consumer shopping for clothes in both store and non-store retailing environments (e.g. retail store, catalogue and the Internet), measuring consumer individual characteristics and perceptions of product and channel characteristics to clarify the nature of channel characteristics, their interaction and finally determine the influence of the three factors (individual, product and channel) on brand switching. A questionnaire is used (administered online) for a sample drawn from a company's database. The data analysis involves a number of techniques including factor and reliability analyses for summarising the data and correlation and regression analyses for investigating associations among variables. Results indicate no linear relationships between brand switching and the three factors, although a number of conclusions are reached which emphasise the role of the 'channel' in consumer behaviour research.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Consumer behaviour is influenced by various environmental factors after World War II and by the behavioural sciences and the way they understand and explain human behaviour. Research in consumer behaviour domain was pursued using three approaches including the 'a priori', 'empirical' and 'eclectic'. The attempt to understand consumer behaviour prompted academics to consider a scientific grounding for consumer research, adopting positivism as its paradigm. Although, it is debatable whether consumer behaviour represents a science at a whole due to the immense borrowing of theories from the behavioural sciences and the researchers overlooking in developing theories of consumer behaviour.

The researcher considers that given her positivist orientation derived from her education and the fact that positivism is the dominant paradigm, the approach used in this thesis cannot be other than positivism.

### **1.1 Origins of consumer behaviour**

Consumer behaviour appears to originate from the economic theory and the factors which move an economy from being production-driven to market driven (Engel et al, 1995), as well as from the behavioural sciences and the way human behaviour is understood and explained.

As an economy progresses from being production-driven to market-drive, it is influenced by competition and technology. As a result, there is the need for practical

information about the consumers' behaviour and motivation. Such information derives from research and assists in the formation of market strategies.

Consumer behaviour evolved as a field of inquiry after the Second World War as a result of several environmental factors, which encouraged the need for formal theories and models of buyer behaviour (table 1.1).

**Table 1.1 Environmental influences after World War II**

- Although consumers emerged from the war with pent-up demand and plenty of money, competitive growth soon led to the situation where productive capacity outstripped demand, thus motivating a widespread turn to the marketing concept.
- Television emerged as the 'great salesperson'. When combined with other media the mass communication age hit full speed.
- Distribution underwent a virtual revolution with the emergence of shopping centres and discount houses. For the first time potential buyers could purchase with convenience and ease.
- Manufacturers were able to use advertising and mass media power to pull new products through the channel of distribution, and distributors had little choice but to comply.
- Economic growth burgeoned with only temporary downturns, and the western world experienced an unprecedented period of wealth and buying power.

Source: Engel et al, (1995)

In developing consumer behaviour theories, researchers have used three approaches (Lunn, 1974). The first two, the a priori approach and the empirical approach, encompass researchers' major attempts in developing consumer theories until 1964.

### 1.2 The a priori approach

The a priori approach was concerned with the exploration of concepts and theories from the behavioural sciences (e.g. psychology, social anthropology and economics)

and their introduction in consumer behaviour. Kotler (1965) distinguished these approaches into five categories including the,

- Pavlovian approach
- Freudian approach
- Veblenian approach
- Marshallian approach
- Hobbesian approach

#### 1.2.1 The Pavlovian approach

Since Pavlov's attempt in 1903 to identify how behaviour is motivated by external stimuli, there has been extensive research attention in the field of animal and human behaviour. At the heart of this literature is the simple psychological model of Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R), which is used to determine how humans respond to various stimuli.

This model is a representation of the learning theory which postulates four notions including, drive, cue, response and reinforcement (Engel et al, 1973; Kotler, 1965). Many contemporary models of buyer behaviour are based on this generic model such as, Nicosia (1966), Howard and Sheth (1969), Kotler, (1967) and Engel et al (1968).

#### 1.2.2 The Freudian approach

This approach is based on the work of Freud and emphasises the psychoanalytic drives of human behaviour. Freud's theory postulates that personality is driven by

instinctive motivations and is structured around the psyche, ego and super ego.<sup>1</sup> This theory represents a useful reference for contemporary models of consumer behaviour which incorporate personality as a determinant of the individual's decision process. (Zaltman and Wallendorf, 1979; Chisnall, 1985).

Chisnall (1985) suggests that this theory is heavily criticised because of the lack of empirical evidence to suggest the existence of those mechanisms (psyche, ego and super-ego). On the other hand, the theory emphasises that these mechanisms represent only names of psychological processes which do not exist on their own, but rather function together under the command of ego (Zaltman and Wollendorf, 1979).

In addition, the application of this theory in the context of marketing and consumer behaviour highlights the implication of symbolic motivation, where certain product shapes convey different meanings to individuals.

### 1.2.3 The Veblenian approach

Originating from social anthropology, the Veblenian theory argues that individual consumption is greatly motivated by factors deriving from the social environment (Kotler, 1965). Consumption is therefore the outcome of a 'prestige-seeking' type of behaviour. The introduction of this theory in consumer behaviour highlights the influence of individual behaviour by a number of factors including cultures, social class and reference groups. The understanding of these factors appears to be a catalyst

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<sup>1</sup> In Freudian theory, ego is the rational aspect of personality concerned with dealing with the world. Super-ego is the internal representation of values and morals.



in explaining consumer decision (or choice) processes. As a result, these factors have been incorporated in various consumer behaviour models including Howard and Sheth (1969) and Engel et al (1968) where they assist in explaining various notions including 'word-of-mouth'.

#### 1.2.4 The Marshallian and Hobbesian approaches

The Marshallian theory originates from the field of economics and supports that individual purchase decisions are in fact the outcome of rational and economic calculations. It suggests that consumers give emphasis on the economics of their decisions such as the efficient allocation of their income on the purchase of goods with the highest utility. The application of this theory in the context of consumer behaviour has been dismissed as 'an absurd figment of ivory-tower imagination' (Kotler, 1965), because it lacks of behavioural essence. At the same time, it provides some useful insights for purchase situations of high-investment products (e.g. housing estates etc.).

Lastly, the Hobbesian approach, highlights the organisational implications of consumer behaviour, by suggesting that individuals are motivated by two types of goals (personal and group) which are conflicting (Kotler 1965). This theory applies in the context of industrial buyer behaviour, where the individual's behaviour is directed towards the achievement of organisational and group goals.

Borrowing from the behavioural sciences appeared to be productive in that many developments in the consumer behaviour domain are based on contributions from social psychology, sociology, anthropology and economics (table 1.2).

**Table 1.2 Contributions of the behavioural sciences to marketing and consumer behaviour**

**1. Facilitating the development of new products as the key to differential advantage:**

- Diffusion of innovations.
- Models of human problem-solving behaviour and choice.
- Measurement of lifestyles and needs.

**2. Discovering and responding to the multiple sources of influence on consumer choice:**

- Models of interpersonal sources and word-of-mouth communication.
- Reference group theory.
- Social class and stratification.

**3. Creating more effective advertising and promotional campaigns:**

- Motivation theories.
- Models of attitude formation and change.
- Perception and information processing.
- Cognitive dissonance and post-purchase information search

**4. Developing brand loyalty:**

- Theory of cognitive dissonance.
- Quantitative models (Bernoulli, Markov, and Learning) of brand loyalty and brand switching.

Source: Engel et al (1995)

In spite of the numerous contributions of the behavioural sciences in consumer behaviour, the a priori approach appears to have many limitations (Lunn, 1974). The most severe one being the fact that many concepts introduced in consumer behaviour (from the behavioural sciences) are speculative or hypothetical with unclear theorising as to their nature and nomology. Therefore their understanding and

conceptualisation in the context of consumer behaviour is likely to convey serious shortcomings.

### 1.3 The empirical and eclectic approaches

As opposed to the a priori, researchers adopting the empirical approach were concerned with deriving patterns and laws of consumer behaviour from empirical research using consumer panel data (Lunn, 1974). Their focus was to explain how things work as opposed to what motivates those things to work the way they do, in the context of consumer behaviour.

As a result, the empirical approach lacks explanatory power since it disregards illuminating theories from the behavioural sciences. At the same time, it provides a systematic basis of knowledge derived from observation of the consumers' behaviour.

Alternatively, according to Lunn (1974) the eclectic approach has become relatively popular in contemporary consumer behaviour research. It combines the strengths of the a priori and empirical approaches to create a synthesis of two information sources. First, it applies various theories and concepts from the behavioural sciences, which appear to be relevant in the consumer behaviour domain. Second, it derives the findings from systematic empirical research in consumer behaviour.

This approach is the most elaborate of the two in that it provides a comprehensive perspective of consumer behaviour (Lunn, 1974). It attempts to integrate the major influences of consumer behaviour sometimes in a single theoretical framework (e.g. Nicosia 1966; Engel et al, 1968; Howard and Sheth, 1969). On the other hand, it

appears to be a potential source of a major weakness, in that it creates complexity and confusion by having large numbers of variables and inter-relationships.

Given the discussion on the three approaches to consumer behaviour research, the chapter now looks at consumer behaviour's standing as a science and the epistemological issues involved.

#### 1.4 Consumer behaviour as a science

According to Nachmias and Nachmias (1981), a discipline may be called a science on the basis of its methodology. It is knowledge which is collected by the means of the scientific methodology. The scientific method is not the only mode by which people have attempted to acquire knowledge about themselves and their environment. Unlike those modes, the scientific approach is based on a set of fundamental rules (or assumptions) which represent the issues in the area of the philosophy of social sciences called epistemology (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1981). The assumptions are,

- Nature is orderly and regular. Things do not happen by chance, there are patterns that can be understood and explained.
- We can know nature. Human beings are a part of the nature therefore they can be studied, explained and understood by the same methods as nature.
- Knowledge is superior to ignorance. It should be pursued for its own sake and for advancing human conditions.

- All natural phenomena have natural causes. This assumption rejects supernatural explanations of natural phenomena.
- Nothing is self-evident. Claims of truth must be demonstrated objectively. This is how scientific knowledge is verified.
- Knowledge is derived from the acquisition of experience. Scientific knowledge relies on empirical findings. Perceptions, experience and observations.

These assumptions are inherent in the work of scientists in studying social phenomena. The objective is to produce reliable knowledge to explain, predict and understand empirical phenomena (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1981). There are many guiding paradigms for knowledge generation. In the context of consumer behaviour most researchers adopt a positivist perspective to understand and predict consumer behaviour and to discover cause-effect relationships (Engel et al, 1995).

Burrell and Morgan (1979) state that positivism characterises a particular type of epistemology which,

*"...seeks to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements"(p5).*

Unlike other paradigms (e.g. postmodernism) positivism adopts the perspective of the 'observer' as a valid mode for understanding human and consumer activities. In the context of consumer behaviour, positivists most often follow a particular order of the

methodological domain, for example conceptual-methodological-substantive in order to arrive at scientific theories (Lutz, 1989).

A part of this methodology used to acquire scientific knowledge, is hypothetico-deductivism where researchers proceed by making hypotheses with the objective of deducing predictions from them and establishing whether these predictions are fulfilled in reality (Pratt, 1978).

It appears that the importance of philosophy of sciences has been neglected in the domain of consumer research (Bristor, 1985). As argued, a discipline is established as a science by its approach to knowledge. Such an approach should contribute to the development of theory since it [theory] enhances the goals of science (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1981). Viable theories are a necessary requirement for a science.

In consumer behaviour, researchers do not seem very concerned with the development of theories. Olson (1982) states,

*"We have become skilled at borrowing theories from other disciplines and applying them to our problems...Our discipline applies borrowed theory, but does relatively little to develop theory"(p6).*

It is therefore debatable whether the discipline of consumer behaviour represents a science at a whole. Olson (1982) states,

*"I am not going to extensively defend the issue of whether we ought to aspire to have a science of consumer behaviour. It*

*seems to me that many of us either think consumer behaviour is already a science or else we are trying to make it one...I don't think we are quite there yet. But I do think that a science of consumer behaviour is a worthwhile goal to pursue"(p5).*

The development of theory in consumer behaviour is important. Researchers should be concerned with developing or improving theory by trying to produce better representations of the phenomena of interest. Better representations assist in finding solutions to a problem and stimulating new research directions (Olson, 1982).

#### 1.5 The researchers perspective

The theoretical and methodological perspective adopted by a researcher appears to be the result of many influences including his or her environment, intellectuality and personality (Mitroff and Kilman, 1978).

The current researcher's orientation is derived from an education in marketing with a particular focus on consumer behaviour, and the pursuit of knowledge using quantitative methodologies. Furthermore, as discussed, the dominant paradigm for knowledge generation in the consumer behaviour discipline is positivism so are the foundations for measuring the many psychological aspects of behaviour involved in the present research [which examines brand switching behaviour]. While it is recognised that other philosophies may also apply, for the purposes of this research the adopted paradigm is the one of positivism using the scheme of hypothetico-deductivism to acquire scientific knowledge.

### 1.6 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 has introduced the reader in the area of inquiry, with a discussion of the origins of consumer behaviour, the convictions of scientific knowledge and the orientation of the researcher. The thesis is structured on the basis of the domain order of the positivist paradigm: Conceptual-Methodological-Substantive.

It is the therefore the objective to introduce the reader to a thorough review of the literature (chapters 2 and 3) of a number of variables, including among others, variety-seeking behaviour, brand switching, involvement, perceived risk, brand loyalty and hedonism. These concepts represent the conceptual platform on which the thesis' framework is based in an exploratory attempt to investigate the role of individual, product and channel characteristics in brand switching behaviour.

Chapter 4 highlights the platform on which the present research is built. It introduces the concept of the channel and the limited research in the area of retail patronage. At the same time it emphasises the potential role of the channel in choice behaviour and the need for research attention. Chapter 4 represents the link between the conceptual platform of the thesis with the identification of the problem and the development of the thesis' framework to guide the empirical research.

Chapter 5 is concerned with the development of the conceptual framework, the introduction of the notion of the channel and its characteristics in the context of consumer choice. The chapter focuses on the conceptualisation of channel



characteristics and the development of a set of hypotheses with regard to their interaction.

This is followed (chapter 6) by a discussion of the research design in terms of the research instrument used (structure, method of administration) and the product context in which the conceptual framework is applied. It is further concerned with the operationalisation of the conceptual framework in the context of the present research and provides a review of the measurements in the extant literature.

The focus is then shifted towards the discussion of the research sample in chapter 7, which also outlines the data collection and concentrates on the analysis of the data. This includes the familiarisation with the data, its summarisation, the investigation of association and the empirical testing of the conceptual framework in the context of this research. The chapter ends by a discussion of the findings. The last chapter (chapter 8) highlights the conclusions and contributions of the thesis, its limitations and the suggestions for new research directions in the future.

Before proceeding to the literature review of the thesis an outline of the research objectives and direction is presented in the following section.

### 1.7 Research objectives

The thesis explores the role of individual, product and channel characteristics in brand switching behaviour. A conceptual framework is developed on the basis of an existing theoretical model of purchase exploration (Hoyer and Ridgway, 1984) which guides the research. The framework proposes that channel characteristics (i.e. channel involvement, channel loyalty etc.) along with individual (i.e. variety seeking) and product characteristics (i.e. product involvement, brand loyalty etc.) affect consumers switching behaviour. In examining this relationship the objectives include:

- A review and synthesis of the extant literature on variety seeking behaviour, brand switching, involvement, perceived risk, brand loyalty, brand similarity and hedonism (chapters 2 and 3). The literature review examines the nature and interaction among the aforementioned constructs which are the key elements of the conceptual framework.
- A review of the channel literature which highlights the importance of the role of the channel in consumer research and the need for further research in this area (chapter 4).
- The examination of the notion of the channel and its characteristics in the context of the present research. The development of the conceptual framework (chapter 5) focuses primarily on channel characteristics, where a set of eleven hypotheses is developed to explore their nature and nomology in relation to brand switching. At this point, it is important to note that the hypotheses focus exclusively on the channel characteristics (given the limitations in the literature). It is beyond the

scope of this research to develop hypotheses about the interaction among individual and product characteristics with brand switching, since such relationships have been explored by previous literature (e.g. Raju, 1980; Hoyer and Ridgway, 1984).

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of variety-seeking behaviour (VSB) has received a lot of attention in consumer behaviour domain. Authors attempting to model this phenomenon utilise stochastic and deterministic approaches, concentrating mainly on brand switching. The theories that guide these approaches offer various explanations of what triggers VSB. One explanation derived from psychology maintains that individuals have a need for stimulation. Other explanations include a) 'satiation', where consumers become satiated with the attributes of a product following 'frequent consumption' and b) external factors including for example usage situations, and marketing variables (e.g. price promotions, discounts and the retail context).

### 2.1 Variety-seeking behaviour

The basic idea behind variety-seeking behaviour (VSB) is that "*under certain conditions we all have a need for variety in our lives*" (Faison 1977, p172). However, this notion conflicts with the 'classical' theories of learning which describe consumer behaviour as a series of needs that are met by such activities which then become learned responses and are repeated when the needs re-occur. Research in the consumer behaviour domain (e.g. Bass et al 1972) suggests that variety-seeking is likely to account for brand switching in consumer choices. Hagerty (1983) states,

*"Variety-seeking has been one effect suggested to account for this, [brand switching] in which an internal change in the organism occurs when a brand is consumed such that the preference for it declines"(p75).*

VSB has preoccupied many researchers in the last two decades and many explanations and models have been produced in an attempt to understand its relationship with other marketing constructs. It is the objective of this chapter to provide a discussion on the topic of VSB, examining its motives or antecedents and reviewing the extant model of VSB (brand switching).

#### 2.1.1 Motives or antecedents of variety-seeking behaviour

Variety-seeking behaviour (VSB) derives from a body of literature introduced in psychology by Leuba and by Hebb individually in 1955. Psychologists, marketers and economists have examined its antecedents and implications for individual and household choice behaviours. The evolving literature exhibits inconsistencies due to the fact that the term 'variety' has been used occasionally to refer to different phenomena (McAlister and Pessemier, 1982). In an attempt to organise the literature on VSB, McAlister and Pessemier (1982) produced a taxonomy of explanations of 'varied behaviour'<sup>2</sup>. The authors classify varied behaviour as 'derived' and 'direct'.

Derived varied behaviour refers to behaviour which is the result of external motives and is not related with the desire for variety (e.g. multiple needs, multiple users or multiple situations). Direct varied behaviour is the result of 'intra-personal' motives such, the need for stimulation or satiation with a product's attributes.

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<sup>2</sup> The authors avoid the use of the term 'variety-seeking'. Instead, they use 'varied behaviour'.

Based on the work of McAlister and Pessemier (1982), Kahn (1995) developed an integrating framework for understanding the reasons why consumers seek variety. Kahn (1995) classified the motives of VSB into three main categories: 'Satiation/Stimulation', 'External situation', and 'Future preference uncertainty'. The first two categories correspond to McAlister and Pessemier's (1982) 'direct' and 'derived' varied behaviours respectively. The third type, that of 'future preference uncertainty', does not exist in the McAlister and Pessemier framework, and is based on the notion that consumers look for variety in their choices when making multiple purchases for future consumption (e.g. Simonson, 1990).

Following the frameworks of McAlister and Pessemier (1982) and Kahn (1995), and a review of the extant literature on VSB, the discussion is divided into two parts based on two approaches (e.g. schools of thought) that try to conceptualise VSB: 'Inexplicable' (or stochastic) and 'Explicable'.

#### 2.1.2 Inexplicable conceptualisations of variety-seeking behaviour

Under the 'theory of stochastic preference' (Bass, 1974), variety seeking behaviour is viewed as merely 'inexplicable' attributed to "*a stochastic element in the brain*"(p1).

Bass argues that,

*"If there is a stochastic element in the brain which influences choice, then it is not possible even in principle to predict or to understand completely the choice behaviour of individual consumers" (p2).*

Relative preferences dictate the proportion of times each item is chosen and any particular selection indicates that choice is stochastic.

Stochastic models were developed in the sixties and seventies (e.g. Bass et al 1974; Windal, 1978) to describe the statistical properties of buying behaviour. Such models do not incorporate explanatory factors (e.g. product attributes, marketing mix variables). Rather, they propose probabilities to model choice based on the economic theory of utility emphasising the fact that preference for the future is affected by past experience. Even though the use of these models is limited they inspired the evolution of a second generation of models (e.g. Jeuland, 1979) that incorporate variables to explain the probabilities. Little by little this has caused the two 'traditions' [inexplicable (stochastic) and explicable (deterministic)] to converge (e.g. Givon, 1984; Lattin and McAlister, 1985; Kahn et al, 1986).

### 2.1.3 Explicable conceptualisations of variety-seeking behaviour

Despite the view that choice behaviour might include stochastic (e.g. random) components, most of the research in the consumer behaviour domain is based on the rationale [derived from social psychology] that behaviour is caused, and therefore is 'explicable'. The various paradigms that try to explain VSB are categorised here as 'psychological explanations' and 'other explanations'.

### Psychological explanations of variety-seeking behaviour

Psychologists recognised the 'need for variety' as a basic need under the general rubric of exploratory behaviour. In simplified terms, exploratory behaviour refers to 'non-purposeful' behaviour that,

*"Results from motives that do not seem to conform to general expectations" (Raju 1981, p224) and further*

is intended to reduce the uncertainty within the stimulus field (Berlyne, 1960). A number of theories seek to shed light into what motivates exploratory behaviour. Although there is considerable disagreement, the theories have as common ground that individuals prefer an 'intermediate level' of environmental stimulation.

A predominant explanation of VSB is based on the notion of 'Optimal Stimulation Level' or OSL (Hebb, 1955, Leuba, 1955). This maintains that individuals have a preferred or optimal level of environmental stimulation. When the actual level of environmental stimulation [which is determined by properties such as uncertainty, novelty, ambiguity, complexity etc.] is above or below the optimal, individuals will inherently try to adjust that level through exploration (e.g. VSB) or avoidance behaviours (e.g. inertia) (Raju, 1980; Raju, 1981).

Alternative psychological explanations include the Berlyne (1960) 'arousal potential', the Fiske and Maddi (1961) 'variation, ambiguity and intensity of the environmental stimuli', Hunt's (1963) 'Incongruity Concept' and the Driver and Streufert (1965)



'General Incongruity Adaptation Level' (GIAL). Although, these theories differ in their interpretations of the relationship between environmental stimulation and individual preference, they explicitly agree that OSL is related to exploratory behaviour (e.g. VSB) and that it varies among individuals. Specifically it has been found that OSL can determine the degree of individual exploratory tendencies across many situations (Raju, 1980).

#### Other explanations of variety-seeking behaviour

These include 'internal' and 'external' factors that influence variety-seeking behaviour leading eventually to brand switching. These explanations are discussed in the following section in more detail.

#### Internal factors

Some authors follow a 'deterministic' [partial or pure] approach in modelling variety-seeking behaviour (VSB) based on the notion of 'satiation with product attributes' (Jeuland, 1978; McAlister, 1982). Unlike the 'stochastic theory of preference', this notion proposes that VSB is not a random phenomenon and that it can be explained by the alternation among familiar alternatives which is a result of satiation (Jeuland, 1978). McAlister (1982) models brands as 'bundles' of attributes, and argues that repeat consumption of [initially preferred] product attributes, declines over time, leading to VSB.

However, this 'satiation' with a brand or brand attributes, might also be occurring because a) individuals are not able to find a single option that satisfies all the attributes of an ideal point (Huber and Reibstein, 1978) or b) individuals are looking for a balance of attributes to maximise utility (Farquhar and Rao, 1976). These views of satiation with a brand or brand attributes corresponds to the idea that extensive familiarity with the stimulus (e.g. item) causes a decline of the stimulation potential because the stimulus is no longer novel to the consumer (Berlyne, 1960).

In some instances, consumers are faced with the task of making multiple purchases for future consumption. Under such circumstances consumers are fairly uncertain about their future preferences, and the desire for variety is likely to have a significant influence on their choices (Simonson 1990; Kahn and Lehman, 1991). Thus, variety-seeking is sought not because of the utility for diversity per se, but because of the uncertainty about future preferences (Kahn, 1995). Making purchases for future consumption involves a kind of risk in the sense that tastes might change in the future. In order to deal with future changes in taste, consumers employ VSB as a risk-reduction strategy. Additionally, consumers may look for variety in an attempt to simplify<sup>3</sup> the task of choosing the preferred alternatives to satisfy their future tastes.

Lastly, VSB occurs in brand/product choices in order to avoid anticipated over-saturation with the favourite choices (Kahn 1995; Ratner et al, 1999), or because

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<sup>3</sup> In terms of time and effort.

consumers want to avoid making a choice at the present time (Kahn and Lehman 1991; Simonson, 1990).

#### External factors

Brand switching has been shown to result from various factors, other than the need for variety per se. Consumers exhibit variety-seeking in their choices as a result of changes in the 'usage situations', price promotions and the retail environment (McAlister and Pessemier 1982; Hoyer and Ridgway 1984; Kahn and Louie, 1990; Kahn and Raju 1991; Kahn, 1995; Menon and Kahn, 1995; Morgan and Dev 1994). For example, usage situations involve switching brands due to the presence of other people during shopping. In this instance the consumer may be seeking to impress someone. In addition, brand switching may be the result of a) out-of-stock conditions (perhaps because the product is out of stock), b) the timing of consumption (e.g. perhaps related to the time of day or seasonality), c) in order to accommodate different users at the household level.

Further, consumers may choose something different from what they normally choose (switch brands) where price promotions are involved. Research indicates that price promotions have a positive effect on brand switching behaviour (e.g. Kahn and Louie 1990; Kahn and Raju 1991; Morgan and Dev, 1994; Trivedi, 1999). Specifically, in an experiment involving brand choice and price promotions Kahn and Louie (1990) found that respondents sought variety (switched brands) when promotional activity was involved and were loyal to their preferred brands when the price promotions

were retracted. These findings highlight the managerial implications of manipulating promotional variables to affect brand switching.

Another way retailers can affect VSB is by manipulating the retail context (Menon and Kahn, 1995). The authors argue that one can reduce VSB in product choices by offering the stimulation the consumers need in a different context, that of the retail environment. In other words, by changing the choice context the desire to look for variety in brand choice is reduced (Menon and Kahn, 1995). Such changes might involve changing locations of products within a store or changes in the layout.

## 2.2 Exploratory behaviour in the consumer behaviour context

In psychology, exploratory types of behaviour are those associated with variety and novelty seeking (Hirshman, 1980). Although the importance of motives explaining such behaviours in consumer behaviour has been recognised, the empirical research devoted to this issue is very limited (Baumgartner and Steenkamp, 1996). This is attributed to the lack of a coherent conceptualisation and measurement of exploratory behaviour in consumer research. Despite the fact that there is a general agreement that activities such as 'risk taking', 'information search', 'innovativeness', and 'brand switching' (Baumgartner and Steenkamp, 1996; Raju, 1980) may be regarded as manifestations (or dimensions) of exploratory behaviour, there is a clear disagreement among researchers as to the exact number of these dimensions.

The issue of dimensions preoccupies various authors, and in one instance up to seven dimensions have been identified (Raju, 1980). Even so, in most instances, the only difference among authors looking at this issue is in 'the labelling of the abscissa' (Hirschman, 1980; Price and Ridgway, 1982; Joachimstahaler and Lastovicka, 1984; Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1992; Baumgartner and Steenkamp, 1996). In other words, authors talk about the same thing but using different terms. The result is confusion in the literature since the various terms used for labelling the same behavioural manifestations seem to be associated with different phenomena. The research of 'exploration' in the consumer context focuses mainly on three types of behaviour, as categorised by Price and Ridgway (1982):

- Exploratory purchase behaviour. Examples of such behaviour include brand switching and innovating.

*"Variety-seeking that involves purchase and manifests itself in several different ways" (p56).*

- Vicarious exploratory behaviour. This type of behaviour does not involve product purchase although it may eventually lead to one.

*"Variety-seeking by engaging in behaviours such as reading about, talking to others about, or shopping for new or unfamiliar products" (p56).*

- Use innovativeness.

*"The use of a previously adopted product in a single novel way [or] the use of a currently owned product in a wide variety of ways" (p57).*

Although variety-seeking is likely to be relevant to other areas in marketing such as segmentation and risk taking (Raju, 1980 and 1983; Givon, 1984; Trivedi et al 1994; Trivedi, 1999) most of the research has concentrated on the area of exploratory purchase behaviour and especially brand switching. Specifically, VSB has been modelled as a cause of brand switching, and in most of the cases, authors use the terms 'variety-seeking' and 'brand switching' interchangeably (Jeuland, 1978; McAlister 1982; McAlister and Pessemier, 1982; Givon, 1984; Kahn et al 1986; Lattin and McAlister, 1985) to denote alternation among familiar items simply for variety.

#### 2.2.1 Variety-seeking behaviour and brand switching

Most of the research in the area of variety-seeking focuses on modelling brand switching as a phenomenon of variety-seeking behaviour using probability theory (e.g. Jeuland, 1978; Givon, 1984; Lattin and McAlister, 1985; Lattin, 1987; Feinberg et al, 1992 and 1994; Trivedi et al, 1994). When modelling brand switching most authors assume that the motivation is internal.

### Models of brand switching

Most of the extant models of brand switching are based on the idea that variety-seeking behaviour is caused by satiation with product attributes (e.g. Jeuland, 1978; McAlister 1982). These models are termed 'Multi-attribute Utility Models' (Hutchinson 1986) and incorporate 'economic utility theory' where consumer preferences for different brands in the product class are modelled as a relative utility measure. Jeuland (1978) proposed the first deterministic and mathematical model of VSB as a form of purchase event feedback:

*"On any given purchase occasion, the model specifies that the consumer will choose the highest utility brand, this utility being affected by the consumer's past experience with the brand" (p33).*

Hagerty (1983) extended the work of Jeuland to incorporate the effects of 'similarity' and 'inhibition'. The author was concerned with the effect of the experience with product A on product B where product B is similar to product A. Further, Jeuland's model considers the parameter of 'forgetting' [the brand] due to time passage. In extending this, Hagerty incorporated the effect of the consumption (trial) of other brands, as a parameter of 'forgetting'. In addition, McAlister (1982) suggested a similar model where products are viewed as bundles of attributes and which predicts the similarity effect from how close together two stimuli are rated on important attributes.

These models represent the 'explicable' viewpoint of VSB and their guiding theory was that of the stochastic viewpoint. The convergence of the two schools of thought produced a combination of utility theory expressed with probabilities. As a result, most of the brand switching models are expressed as Markov processes using 'transition probabilities', each stating the probability of choosing a particular brand  $B_i$  directly following the selection of brand  $B_j$ . This implies that future preference is affected by past experience (utility dependence).

Some authors provide a taxonomy of stochastic models (e.g. Kahn et al 1986) and attempt to examine and compare markov processes (e.g. Feinberg et al, 1994). The following section discusses the various models of brand switching.

#### Markov models of brand switching

The simplest form of a markovian process is the '*zero-order model*' (e.g. Bernoulli and multinomial) where brand choices are independent, meaning that they do not consider the influence of past purchases on current brand choice. Such models assume the absence of variety-seeking or reinforcement behaviours, thus the conditional probability of choosing brand  $B_i$  following brand  $B_j$  is independent of  $B_j$ , thus  $a_{ij} = \pi_i$  where  $\pi_i$  denotes brand preference (Feinberg et al 1994). The zero-order model serves as a benchmark in the taxonomy of the seven stochastic models proposed by Kahn et al (1986) for classifying types of variety-seeking and reinforcement behaviours.



Jeuland (1979) generalised the zero-order model to develop the first 'first-order' Markov process to model inertia or reinforcement behaviour. The 'first-order' model is a more sophisticated form and the most commonly used in modelling VSB. The model incorporates brand choice probability,  $\theta_i$ , and brand choice 'inertia',  $I$ , which is a form of short-term loyalty, and is illustrated below in a transition matrix:

$$\begin{bmatrix} P_{11} & P_{10} \\ P_{01} & P_{00} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{matrix} & \begin{matrix} 1 & 0 \end{matrix} \\ \begin{matrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{matrix} & \begin{bmatrix} I + (1-I)\theta & 1-I-(1-I)\theta \\ (1-I)\theta & 1-(1-I)\theta \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix}$$

Where  $P_{11}[I + (1-I)\theta]$  and  $P_{00}[1 - (1-I)\theta]$  denote the transition probabilities for repeat purchase (inertia) and  $P_{10}[(1-I)\theta]$  and  $P_{01}[1 - (1-I)\theta]$  are the switching probabilities (Jeuland, 1979).

The first markov model of VSB was proposed by Givon (1984) based on Jeuland's work. Givon (1984) proposed that brand choice behaviour is determined by the utility derived from switching brands and also by individual preferences for different brands. In essence, the choice of brand is determined by a combination of brand preference,  $\theta_i$ , and variety-seeking (Givon, 1984). The model incorporates a parameter  $V$  which denotes a measure of active variety-seeking and which ranges from 0 to 1. Where  $V$  equals zero, no VSB is observed and the model is equivalent to the zero-order model. Where  $V$  equals one, behaviour is strictly guided by variety-seeking and the repeat purchase probability,  $P_{ij}$ , is zero. Thus brand choice is assumed as a combination of

variety-seeking and brand preference. Most first-order models measuring VSB are based on modifications of the Givon (1984) model (e.g. Feinberg et al 1994; Trivedi et al 1994). In Trivedi et al (1994), the authors treat VSB as a random phenomenon as opposed to other authors (e.g. Lattin and McAlister, 1985; Feinberg et al, 1992) that assume VSB as a fixed parameter. In this way the authors capture behaviour by allowing the consumer to exhibit variation in the levels of VSB on each purchase occasion.

Further, Feinberg et al (1994) modified the Givon model to account for greater likelihood of switching to a more preferred brand than to a less preferred one [as opposed to the Givon model which assumes that when a consumer switches from a brand the  $V$  parameter is equally distributed amongst the other brands in the evoked set]. Instead, Feinberg et al (1994) distribute the  $V$  parameter amongst the other brands in proportion to their preference.

#### First-order models that incorporate marketing variables

Lattin and McAlister (1985) propose a similar model, which incorporates the effects of brand similarities in terms of product attributes on variety-seeking tendencies. Their rationale is that, an individual who has just consumed brand A will be less inclined to choose brand B when brand B shares many features with brand A. In this case brands A and B are 'substitutes' and the consumer is more likely to choose a 'complementary' brand (e.g. brand C) which is composed of features dissimilar to those of brands A and B.

The Lattin and McAlister model was used by Feinberg et al (1992) to examine the market share implications of changes in variety-seeking intensity, brand preferences and similarities between brands. Similarly, Feinberg et al (1994) use the model to predict changes in long-run probabilities relative to changes in variety-seeking intensity, brand preferences and inter-brand similarity.

Other authors (e.g. Kahn and Raju, 1991; Kahn and Louie, 1990) examine the effects of price discounts and price promotions on the choice behaviour of variety-seeking and reinforcement consumers. Based on Kahn et al (1986), Kahn and Raju (1991) operationalised variety-seeking and reinforcement behaviours as choice behaviour where the extent of variety-seeking or reinforcement behaviour determine the repurchase probability. For example, in a first-order variety-seeking process the repeat purchase probability is lower than the one in a zero-order model. Conversely, in a first-order reinforcement model, the repeat probability is higher than the one in a zero-order model (Kahn et al, 1986).

These models are a part of the taxonomy of stochastic processes proposed by Kahn et al (1986) and are consistent with the work of Jeuland (1979) and Givon (1984). Other more complex and higher-order models of VSB include Lattin (1987) and Bawa (1990). Such models do not offer better predictions of the market share [compared to the first-order and zero-order models] but rather they offer a better description of the choice behaviour. Higher-order models allow for longer choice histories, in contrast to the first-order models where only the last choice has an effect on the current one.

Lattin (1987) proposed a 'balance model' which captures choice-event feedback (e.g. Jeuland 1978) and product attribute satiation (e.g. McAlister, 1982). This model maintains that individual choice variability is observed due to,

*"The need to balance current consumption according to the impact of past consumption" (p 49).*

Unlike the Givon model, this model identifies and differentiates brand-level and attribute-level effects on choice behaviour simultaneously.

Similarly, Bawa (1990) proposed a 'variable-order' model of consumer choice, which allows the data to indicate the order of the choice process e.g. zero-order, first-order etc. This model is based on the assumption that there is within-consumer variability in the tendency to seek or avoid variety, for example consumers may be variety-seekers or inertial at different times depending on the choice history (Bawa, 1990.). Bawa models repeat purchase by allowing four different types of behaviour: zero order, pure inertia, pure variety-seeking and hybrid behaviour<sup>4</sup>. Unlike in first-order processes, choice in this model is assumed to be affected by choices made after the most recent brand switch, for example, on occasion  $t$  choice is influenced by choices made on occasions  $t-1, t-2, \dots, t-r$  where  $t-r$  is the most recent switch with  $r \geq 1$ . In this way choices are assumed to be a function of the run's<sup>5</sup> length for the brand purchased last (Bawa 1990). Bawa's model does not incorporate brand similarity effects on choice however, is in the same line with the Trivedi et al (1994)

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<sup>4</sup> Bawa (1990) terms 'hybrid behaviour' a mixture of inertia and variety-seeking behaviours.

model which assumes variety-seeking as a random phenomenon and not as stable over time.

Most models of VSB (with the exception of Kahn et al, 1986) are individual level models using a two-brand framework for purposes of parsimony. However, Feinberg et al (1992) used the McAlister and Lattin (1985) model in three-brand and five-brand cases. The models assume that all observed consumer switches occur due to variety-seeking and not other external factors as in Givon (1984) Kahn et al (1986), Lattin and McAlister (1985), Lattin (1987) and Bawa (1990). This can be explained by the fact that authors treat brand switching as synonymous to variety-seeking. For example Givon refers to his model as 'variety-seeking/inertia model', using definitions such as,

*"The notion of variety-seeking (or avoidance) behaviour is defined here to be the phenomenon of an individual consumer switching brands...from" Givon 1984,(p2-3).*

Further, one major stream of research (Givon 1984; Kahn et al, 1986; Lattin and McAlister, 1985; Lattin, 1987; Bawa 1990) models variety-seeking using data such as observed purchases or consumption histories which does not indicate whether the observed consumer switches are a result of variety-seeking behaviour or any other external factors. Through the use of panel data authors can not distinguish 'true'<sup>6</sup> VSB from general variations in behaviour. Van Trijp et al (1996) strongly point out that,

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<sup>5</sup> A string of consecutive purchases of the same brand.

*"As a consequence, the use of such data threatens the validity of the variety-seeking parameters obtained, because the parameters combine two conceptually different phenomena"(p282).*

The authors highlight the need to distinguish between brand switching that occurs due to variety-seeking and that, which occurs due to other external factors. They based their empirical article on the original work of Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) which forms the foundation of the present research and which is the subject of the following chapter.

### 2.3 Summary of the chapter

The phenomenon of variety-seeking behaviour is explained by the notion of optimal stimulation level and other theories which all highlight the individual need for stimulation. In situations where environmental stimulation is low, individuals will increase its level by engaging in variety-seeking behaviour. Variety-seeking behaviour may be expressed in many ways however, brand switching in product choices has received the most attention.

Various authors model brand switching based on variety seeking using probability theory (e.g. Givon, 1984). Such models include zero-order, or first-order markov processes which incorporate 1) the effect of previous choices on the current choice of a given brand or 2) the effect of marketing variables (e.g. price promotions, discounts and brand similarities).

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<sup>6</sup> Behaviour which results from internal motives

### **3.0 THE HOYER AND RIDGWAY THEORETICAL MODEL**

The reader will recall the brand switching models discussed in chapter 2 (e.g. Jeuland, 1979; Hagerty, 1983; Givon, 1984; Lattin and McAlister, 1985; Lattin, 1987; Bawa, 1990; Kahn and Louie, 1990; Kahn and Raju, 1991; Feinberg et al, 1992 and 1994; Trivedi et al, 1994) and the various approaches used in the literature. By far, the majority of researchers of brand switching utilise probability theory to express variety seeking and inertial behaviours (e.g. Bernouli, first and second order markovian processes-see chapter 2, pages 40-48). Despite their prevalence and extensive use, such models are flawed in that their underlying assumption is that brand switching is exclusively the result of variety seeking caused by internal motivators (e.g. satiation with brand or its attributes). This assumption represents a major shortcoming in that it fails to acknowledge the impact of external motivators (e.g. decision strategies, influence of others etc.) on consumers branded purchases. To fully understand or represent influences on brand switching behaviour, a model should include both internal (intrinsic) and external (extrinsic) elements. Given the need to distinguish among the various causes of brand switching, Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) propose the only theoretical model of purchase exploration (e.g. brand switching) which separates the internal (optimal stimulation level, satiation etc.) from the external causes of brand switching (decision strategies, situational factors, dissatisfaction with brand-see figure 3.1, page 52).

In addition, and again unlike other models, Hoyer and Ridway explore the mediating role of the product class in the occurrence of brand switching behaviour by examining specific product characteristics. Their model proposes that, while brand switching is motivated by variety seeking, the product class in which it [brand switching] is likely to occur is determined by involvement, perceived risk, brand loyalty, difference between brands and hedonism. The fact that the model explores a wider range of brand switching motivators, than other models, suggests that it is conceptually more robust. For this reason it provides a good, sound platform on which research can be based and extended.

What is more, the model represents an area of inquiry yet to receive research attention, which makes it attractive in stimulating new research directions. Indeed, as already noted, there is a plethora of research that models brand switching based on the assumption that variety seeking behaviour is caused by internal factors. However, only few attempts have been made in the literature (so far) to consider both internal and external factors (e.g. Hoyer and Ridgway, 1984; Van Trijp et al, 1996).

Hence, from the perspectives of conceptual robustness, of the range of influences on brand switching, and from a need for empirical testing of such alternative models, the Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) theoretical model of purchase exploration has been selected as the basis for this thesis' conceptual framework (discussed in detail chapter 5).



### 3.1 Theoretical model of purchase exploration

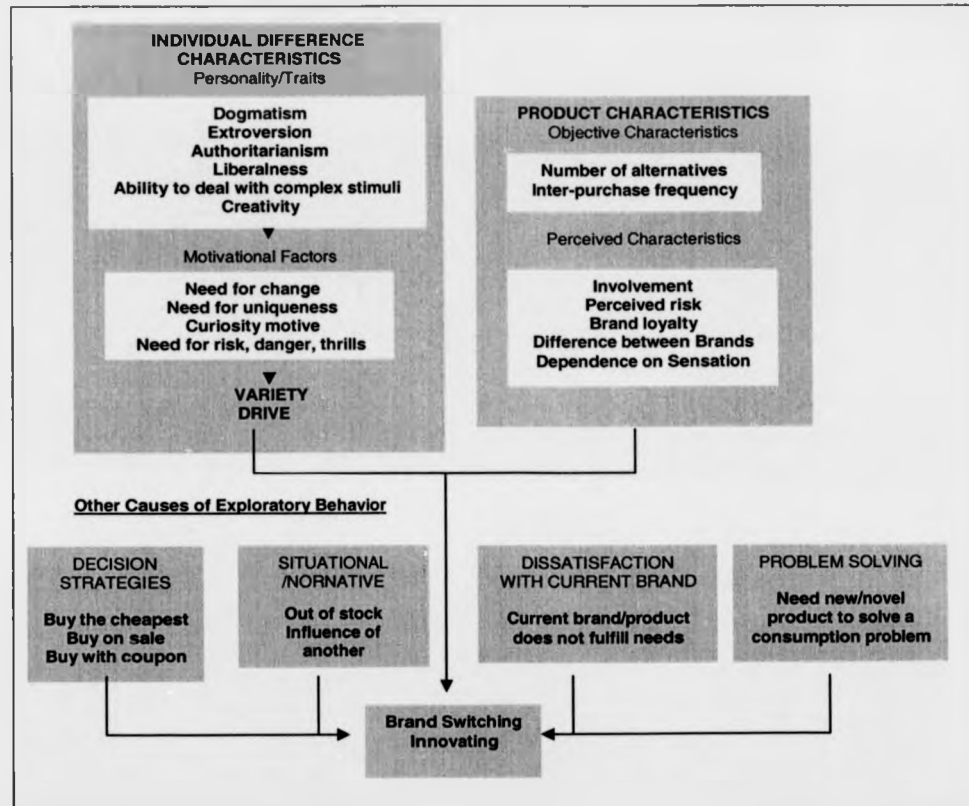
Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) proposed an integrative and coherent theoretical framework of exploratory purchase behaviour which distinguishes the brand switching which occurs as a result of variety-seeking (internal) from brand switching which occurs as a result of other causes (external). The authors define variety-seeking behaviour (VSB) as *"the desire for a new and novel stimulus"* and propose that,

*"...when and with which products purchase exploration occurs is a function of two major factors: a) individual-difference characteristics and b) product level characteristics. That is, it is suggested that individuals possess a variable level of drive which reflects the overall need for variety, but that the product category chosen to express this drive is based on certain characteristics of the product" (p115).*

Other causes of brand switching refer to decisions strategies, situational/normative, dissatisfaction with the current brand, and problem solving (figure 3.1). These causes seem to correspond to the 'derived varied behaviour' of McAlister and Pessemier (1982) and to the 'external factors' discussed in chapter 2 (page 35).

In the context of this research, external causes of brand switching are deliberately excluded since the concern is the examination of brand switching caused entirely by variety-seeking behaviour.

**Figure 3.1 The Hoyer and Ridgway theoretical model of exploratory purchase behaviour**



Source: Hoyer and Ridgway (1984)

The following sections focus on the discussion of individual difference characteristics and product characteristics and their proposed influence on brand switching behaviour.

### 3.2 Individual difference characteristics

The Hoyer and Ridgway model theorises that individual difference characteristics interact with product characteristics to determine brand switching or innovating behaviour. They consist of a number of personality traits and motivating factors which appear to determine the variety drive. In particular, psychology literature addresses the relationship between various personality variables and the motivation towards variety-seeking, change or novelty. For example, individuals characterised as authoritarian or dogmatic may exhibit an aversion toward change. Conversely, creative individuals with the ability to deal with complex stimuli are likely to exhibit a need for change, uniqueness or risk. The extent of these needs (e.g. need for change etc.) is likely to determine the individuals' variety-seeking behaviour.

### 3.3 Product characteristics

Product characteristics include the objective and perceived characteristics. The former being the number of alternatives and the inter-purchase frequency are 'concrete' characteristics that do not vary amongst individuals. According to Hoyer and Ridgway (1984), objective characteristics influence the occurrence of brand switching consistently across the majority of consumers. In other words, brand switching depends on the objective characteristics; for example, brand switching is likely to occur in a product class with a large number of alternatives. Where a few alternatives are available, switching might be difficult or discouraged. In addition, switching brands depends on the inter-purchase frequency. In a product class where inter-purchase frequency can be relatively short (e.g. groceries) brand switching is more

likely to occur than in cases of lengthy inter-purchase time (e.g. electrical appliances, electronics). These two objective characteristics serve as a general screening mechanism which determines the product class in which brand switching is more likely to occur.

### 3.3.1 Perceived characteristics

Perceived characteristics are product characteristics that are determined by consumer perceptions, as such varying from individual to individual. These characteristics are entirely subjective and allow heterogeneity in the occurrence of brand switching across consumers within a particular product class (Hoyer and Ridgway, 1984). The authors argue that objective and perceived characteristics interact to determine in which product classes brand switching is likely to occur, creating in this way a 'taxonomy' for its occurrence.

The following sections review the extant literature on the perceived product characteristics including involvement, perceived risk, brand loyalty, difference between brands and dependence on sensation.

#### 3.3.1.1 Involvement

The notion of involvement has been linked to marketing after Krugman's (1967) measurement of involvement with advertising. Since then and especially in the decade of 1980s', intensive and growing attention in consumer research produces an

enormous bulk of research which focuses extensively on conceptualizing and measuring involvement.

Numerous articles (e.g. Tiger et al, 1976; Rothschild, 1979; Lastovicka and Gardner, 1979; Lastovicka, 1979; Mitchell, 1979; Tyebjee, 1979; Vaughn, 1980; Mitchell, 1981; Bloch, 1981; Bloch, 1982; Arora, 1982; Shimp and Sharma 1983; Park and Young, 1983; Cohen, 1983; Rothschild, 1984; Antil, 1984; Muncy and Hunt, 1984; Traylor and Joseph, 1984; Kapferer and Laurent, 1985a; Zaickowsky, 1985; Slama and Taschian, 1985; Richins and Bloch, 1986; Jensen et al, 1986; and 1989; Ratchford, 1987; Zaickowsky, 1985, 1986; Higie and Feick, 1989; McQuarrie and Munson, 1986 and 1992; Muncy, 1990; Venkatraman, 1987; Venkatraman, 1988 and 1990; Richins and Root-Shaffer, 1988; Dholakia, 1997; etc.) discuss the nature of this hypothetical construct associating it with other concepts such as perceived risk, information search, attribute comparison, brand loyalty, retail context, diffusion process, opinion leadership and advertising. Specifically perceived risk appears to be of particular importance since it has been hypothesized as an antecedent (Rothschild 1979; Bloch and Richins, 1983), a dimension (Laurent and Kapferer 1985a), and a consequence (Venkatraman, 1987) of involvement.

The extensive literature on involvement appears to be contradictory and inconclusive as to what involvement represents in consumer behaviour:

*"At present there is no agreement on the basic nature of involvement"* (Laaksonen 1997, p6).

There are numerous conceptualisations and measurements of involvement, although no unified definition and measurement. In addition, there is an apparent concern with the issue of 'dimensionality' of involvement and many contradicting views and measures of involvement have been proposed.

Involvement originates from the field of social psychology (e.g. Sherif and Sherif, 1967) and the notion of 'ego-involvement', which refers to the relationship between an individual and an issue or object. The conceptualisation(s) of involvement in social psychology has been the basis for applying [and treating] involvement in the consumer behaviour domain. Because involvement is viewed as a hypothetical construct its conceptualisation depends on the theory which it is embedded (e.g. social psychology). The heterogeneity and variation which prevail in terms of definitions and the content of involvement in social psychology (Laaksonen, 1997) complicate the theoretical application of involvement in consumer behaviour, creating confusion.

Laaksonen argues that this complexity and confusion is due to a) the variation in the conceptualisation of involvement proposed in social psychology and b) the differences in the application of involvement in different contexts:

*"..the differences in social psychological and consumer behaviour contexts and objects cause their own problems: the attitude object studied in social psychology has been a social issue and not a tangible object (e.g. a product) as it is often the case in consumer behaviour. Further, in social psychology, involvement has been studied in the context of persuasive communication, whereas in consumer behaviour the framework within which involvement has been considered is much broader and includes different aspects of this*

*behaviour" (p5).*

This heterogeneity is evident from a review of the extant literature. The fact that the literature on involvement is extensive yet guided by contradicting views creates confusion when it comes to understanding involvement. The only thorough attempt ever made to organise the various conceptualisations of involvement is that of Laaksonen (1997) who suggests three categories:

- Cognitively-based approach
- Individual-state approach
- Response-based approach

This classification embraces the initial distinction of involvement proposed by Houston and Rothschild (1978) and Rothshild (1979) who suggested that involvement has three forms or types: Enduring, Situational and Response. Rothschild (1979) proposed that enduring involvement reflects,

*"The level of involvement towards the general object class or issue which an individual brings into the situation" (p77).*

Situational involvement is the,

*"Concern with a specific situation such as a purchase occasion or election" (p77).*

Additionally, Houston and Rothschild, (1978) argue that response involvement represents,

*"The complexity or extensiveness of cognitive and behavioural processes characterising the overall consumer decision process" (p185).*

This distinction represents the benchmark on which other authors have based and extended their work (e.g. Mitchell 1979; Zaichowsky 1985; Richins and Bloch 1986; Park and Young 1983; Vaughn, 1980 and 1986; Ratchford 1987; Zaichowsky 1987; Slama and Taschian 1985; Pucely, et al, 1988; Costly 1988; Beatty and Smith, 1983). Most studies identify no more than three types of involvement, with the exception of Muncy and Hunt (1984) who proposed five types (ego-involvement, commitment, communication involvement, purchase importance, and response involvement).

#### Enduring involvement

Enduring involvement (EI) falls in the category of the cognitively-based approach and has adopted the social psychological perspective. EI refers to the perceived personal relevance of an object to an individual (Laaksonen, 1997). This conceptualisation stems from the notion of 'ego-involvement' in social psychology, where involvement has been treated as the intensity of an attitude dependent on the importance of the attitude (Sherif and Sherif, 1967). In the consumer domain, most researchers (Hupfer and Gardner 1971; Rothschild 1979; Lastovicka and Gardner 1979; Tyebjee; 1979; Bloch 1981; Zaichowsky, 1985; Celsi and Olson; 1988) conceptualise involvement, as the degree (or level) of the psychological linkage



between the individual and the stimulus object. For example, Celsi and Olson argue that,

*"...a consumer's level of involvement with an object, situation, or action is determined by the degree to which s/he perceives that concept to be personally relevant. We suggest that a concept is personally relevant to the extent that consumers perceive it to be self-related or in some instrumental in achieving their personal goals and values. More specifically, the personal relevance of a product is represented by the perceived linkage between an individual's needs goals, and values (self-knowledge) and their product knowledge (attributes and benefits)" (p211).*

This conceptualisation of involvement is representative of all definitions that fall in the cognitively-based category proposed by Laaksonen (1997). The only difference among those definitions is that they refer to different cognitive elements e.g. self-knowledge (in Celsi and Olson, 1988) which determine the level of involvement. Other authors, for example Zaichkowsky (1985) refers to 'interests, needs or values', Bloch (1981) to 'needs and values' and Tyebjee (1979) and Lastovicka and Gardner (1979) use 'values'. This conceptualisation views involvement as a property of an attitude. As such involvement is seen as 'stable' over time, thus *enduring* in nature. Richins and Bloch (1986) use the term 'temporal duration' precisely to highlight this difference between EI and other forms of involvement:

*"Enduring involvement is a stable trait subject to change over long periods of time only" (p281).*

The authors propose that 'duration' is the main and significant factor that distinguishes EI from situational involvement (SI) and not their behavioural outcomes as previously thought. Further, EI and SI seem to have some similarities in terms of their behavioural outcomes (e.g. information search) and of the fact that they both represent some kind of arousal and product interest.

#### Situational involvement

Situational involvement (SI) corresponds to the 'individual-state' category of definitions suggested by Laaksonen (1997). The basic property of this form of involvement is that it represents a 'mental state' and has nothing to do with any cognitive elements such as values, and needs. Unlike enduring involvement, SI represents a temporary (Richins, and Bloch 1986) interest or concern with the object. (e.g. product), which has been aroused by a particular cause such as perceived risk (Zaichkowsky, 1985).

Kapferer and Laurent (1985a) refer to SI as 'purchase-of-the-product' involvement emphasising its transitory (or situational) nature and argue that while enduring involvement (EI) can entail SI the opposite is not possible:

*"Despite no interest nor pleasure in champagne, buying a bottle of champagne to receive good friends is an involving situation because one may be judged on the chosen brand, or because of the price" (p291).*

In other words the authors suggest that perceived risk [associated with the price of the product] appears to be an antecedent (or cause) of the temporary concern with the product (in this case, champagne).

The issue of duration, which is a very important factor of SI, is used by Laaksonen (1997) to present a distinct category of definitions, the 'temporal-state' definitions. The temporal-state category along with the categories of 'stimulus-centred' and 'enduring-state', make up the 'individual-state' approach.

The temporal-state category represents the most common view of involvement and treats involvement as a matter of intensity, for example, *the degree of, the amount of, or the level of*, interest, motivation or arousal etc. This is evident in most of the definitions that represent this viewpoint. For example, Rothschild's (1984) definition points out that involvement represents

*"A state of interest, motivation or arousal" (p217).*

Similarly, Mitchell's (1979) definition indicates clearly that SI represents the intensity of an internal state:

*"I view involvement as an individual level, internal state variable that indicates the amount of arousal, interest or drive"(p194).*

Further, Houston and Rothschild (1978) argue that SI is governed by the characteristics of the object or situation. In other words it is the stimulus that determines both the involvement type (e.g. situational) and its level:

*"A situation is high in involvement when most or all people who interact with the situation develop a high level of concern for their subsequent behaviour in the situation"(p184).*

The authors argue that product characteristics such as price, time, elapsed time of consumption and the complexity of a product contribute directly to situational involvement. A similar view is held by Beatty and Smith (1983) who state that,

*"Situation involvement relates to the degree to which the situation engenders involvement" (p45).*

This viewpoint represents the 'stimulus-centred' approach proposed by Laaksonen (1997) and according to Houston and Rothschild (1978) it provides a 'between-products' perspective of involvement. This approach implies that individual characteristics have no effect on the level of involvement. Conversely, Antil (1984) argues that

*"It is not the product per se that is involving, but the personal meaning or significance the individual attributes to the characteristics of that product that results in involvement" (p204).*

In contrast to Houston and Rothschilds' view, the level of involvement is likely to vary among individuals. Another view of SI, stems from the works of Park and Mittal (1985) and emphasises involvement as a "goal-directed arousal capacity" (p202). The authors view involvement as a state (also Mittal, 1989), governed by two groups of motives which determine two types of involvement: a) utilitarian (cognitive) and b) value expressive (affective). Specifically, although involvement represents arousal, this arousal needs to have some directional property towards an object or situation, e.g. 'goal-directed' (Park and Mittal, 1985). Direction is essential in that involvement reflects a relationship between two 'parties' e.g. one is involved with something (object). In addition, arousal reflects the activation of the information processing mechanisms for example, attention and encoding (Leavitt et al 1981) and the degree (level) of its capacity [directed towards something] is that which determines involvement. Further, 'utilitarian' and 'value-expressive' motives underlay the involvement state:

*"According to the utilitarian motive, an individual would be highly concerned with the cost-benefits rendered by the product or service and interested in the functional performance of the product. According to the value-expressive motive, an individual is more interested in enhancing self-esteem or in the self-concept and in projecting his/her self or desired image upon the outside world through the use of the product or service" (Park and Mittal, 1985 p210).*

This view of involvement seems to fall between EI and SI conceptualisations and is termed 'enduring-state' (Laaksonen, 1997). The author argues that this view of involvement is situation-bound in that it describes the relationship between an

individual an object and a situation; as opposed to the cognitively-based approach where researchers are concerned with the nature of the relationship between a person and an object. Further, in distinguishing the motives which govern involvement (with a product) Park and Mittal (1985) suggested that individuals will either be interested in (or attentive to) a) the product attributes and their performance (utilitarian) or b) the product's meaning in accordance with the individuals self-image. In addition, researchers (Higie et al, 1991) suggest that the individuals who are more attentive to brand attribute information [and less concerned about other cues] are highly involved with the 'task' (task-involvement) as opposed to those who are enduringly involved that attend all kinds of information (Richins and Block, 1986; Higie and Feick 1989). Thus, the conceptualisation given by Park and Mittal (1985) implies some kind of a situational element in it.

#### Response involvement

The term 'response' denotes a behavioural orientation of involvement reflecting for example,

*"Time and/or intensity of effort expended in the undertaking of behaviours" (Stone 1984, p210).*

The author emphasises a dichotomy of involvement as a) a mental state and b) a behavioural process. The mental state captures the view of social psychology and corresponds to enduring and situational views of involvement. On the other hand,

'behavioural' definitions, like the one given above, (e.g. Leavitt et al, 1981, Houston and Rothchild, 1978; Krugman 1967) involve information acquisition and decision processes. For example, Krugman (1967) measured involvement in terms of the number of connections made between the advertised product and the individual's life [during exposure to the advertisement]. Although variables such as [degree of] information searching or acquisition and time have been used to conceptualize and measure involvement, it is widely accepted that they are in fact consequences of involvement and not involvement per se (Cohen, 1983; Zaichowsky, 1985, Laurent and Kapferer 1985b; Dholakia, 1997).

Mitchell (1979) argues that defining involvement as a behavioral process might be misleading since there are other variables that are likely to determine such behavioural processes. Similarly, Antil (1984) states,

*"I see involvement and information processing activities to be two very different and separate concepts, though they can be related.....cognitive processing should be considered a possible result of involvement, not the cause of it"(p205).*

In addition, Tyebjee (1979) found that involvement in a product class is conceptually different from involvement in tasks or activities relating to the product:

*"This may be imply that a conceptual distinction needs to be drawn between a consumer's involvement in a product and his/her involvement in those tasks or activities that relate to this product such as information search and acquisition, product purchase, and product consumption or use" (p301).*

Further, Laaksonen (1997) argues that the focus of this conceptualisation of involvement,

*"...lies not so much on the concept of involvement it self, but rather on the description and understanding of different response patterns" (p59).*

In this context, involvement is seen as behaviour (e.g. information search) in itself as opposed to mediate information search (Laaksonen 1997). The conceptualisation of involvement as a response has been argued in the literature. Most consumer researchers adopt the enduring and situational perspectives however, Cohen (1983) argues that they still do not capture the notion of involvement. He states that these types of involvement suggest,

*"A readiness to respond to a particular set of stimuli" (p325).*

The author also suggests that,

*"The single term (involvement) should not be used to refer to inherent properties of an individual, situation or object" (p325).*



#### Direction (or object) of involvement

The issue of 'direction' (or object) of involvement has preoccupied consumer researchers. There is considerable heterogeneity in terms of which object of involvement should be studied (Laaksonen, 1997). For example, there is product involvement (Bloch, 1981; Brisoux and Chéron, 1990), personal involvement (Zaichhowsky, 1985), purchasing involvement (Slama and Tashchian, 1985), purchasing-decision involvement (Mittal, 1989), task involvement (Tyebjee, 1979), issue involvement (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981) and advertising involvement (Mitchell, 1981). Mitchell (1979) argues that 'direction' is a component of involvement which concerns,

*"The evoking stimulus object and or situation...In addition, the direction component may concern situations and stimulus objects at different levels of generality. Consequently, we may discuss 'involvement' with respect to a product category, a particular brand and the purchase of a product for a particular reason" (p194).*

The great variation in conceptualising involvement and identifying its implications for consumer behaviour creates confusion and difficulty in measuring this construct. The issue of measuring involvement is dealt in chapter 6, which focuses on the methodology issues of the present research.

Another concept in consumer behaviour, surrounded by confusion and diversity, is that of perceived risk (Dholakia 1997). Perceived risk, as already mentioned, has been

associated with involvement and has been treated as an antecedent, dimension and consequence of involvement. The following section is devoted to the review of perceived risk in consumer behaviour.

#### 3.3.1.2. Perceived risk

If consumer behaviour is viewed as a goal-oriented process, then in every buying situation the consumer is trying to identify and purchase products (or services) that will match his goals in the best possible way. During this process, the consumer is likely to perceive some kind of risk as a result of a number of factors [as proposed by Cox, 1967] which include:

- a) Uncertainty with regard to the buying goals (e.g. what the buying goals are).
- b) Uncertainty with regard to which offering (e.g. product, brand, style, size etc.) will match the buying goals.
- c) The consequences of the purchase (e.g. failure to meet the buying goals).

The notion of perceived risk was introduced in consumer behaviour by Bauer (1960), who proposed that consumer behaviour is "an instance of risk taking":

*"Consumer behaviour involves risk in the sense that any action of a consumer will produce consequences which he cannot anticipate with anything approximating certainty, and some of which at least are likely to be unpleasant" (p24).*

Since then, perceived risk has attracted a lot of attention, yet a conceptual definition has not been specified. As a result there is a lack of consistency in the operational definitions and empirical measurements of perceived risk (Taylor, 1974; Peter and Ryan, 1976). Ross (1975) states,

*"..there may well be differences of opinion in what the conceptual definition of risk is, thus leading to different views of its fundamental dimensional structure" (p3).*

Further, perceived risk in consumer behaviour [as opposed to other fields] is used to draw attention only to negative consequences (Stone and Gronhaug, 1993) and it is sometimes used to refer to uncertainty even though the two are not the same (e.g. Peter and Tarpey, 1975; Taylor, 1974). In other disciplines, uncertainty is separated from risk in terms of probabilities<sup>7</sup>.

#### Components of perceived risk

Perceived risk has long been viewed as a multi-dimensional construct (e.g. Cox, 1967 Cunningham, 1967a). In particular, Cox identified two components, that of certainty (or uncertainty) and consequences, which much of the subsequent research has used to measure perceived risk (e.g. Zikmund and Scott, 1974; Vincent and Zikmund, 1976; Dash et al, 1976). Cunningham's (1967a) conceptualisation of perceived risk [in terms of components] is a replica of Cox's work.

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<sup>7</sup> Uncertainty is normally used as a term when the probability is unknown and risk when it is exactly known (Cunningham, 1967).

Alternatively, Bettman (1973) conceptualised perceived risk as consisting of 'uncertainty' however, he substitutes the consequence component with 'importance':

*"..the risk inherent in a brand choice situation within a product class will depend upon the degree to which the buyer believes he can construct a reasonable decision rule for making a brand choice, and the importance to him of making a satisfactory choice within that product class" (p184-5).*

The author distinguished perceived risk at two levels. The first being 'inherent risk', which involves the perceived risk associated with a product category, while the second, 'handled risk' represents the perceived risk at a brand level. Most of the research on perceived risk focuses on a product level (inherent risk) with the exception of Cox and Rich (1964), Dunn et al (1986), Spence et al (1970) and Peter and Ryan (1976) who investigate perceived risk at a brand level.

#### Types of perceived risk

Cox's conceptualisation of the consequences component highlighted the first two types of perceived risk identified in the literature:

*"The consequences may relate to functional or performance goals (Will the product work well?) or to psychosocial goals (How will it affect what others think of me and/or what I think of myself?) and to what the means invested (money, time, effort) to attain those goals" (p7).*

While this rationale indicates explicitly two types of risk that might be involved in a buying situation, that of performance and social-psychological risk, it also implies at

least two other types of risk for example, financial risk and the risk associated with time and effort. In addition, Cunningham (1967a) argued that the consequences that a consumer might expect from a purchase situation might involve

*"Social consequences, financial loss, physical danger, loss of time (inconvenience) or simply a product that does not work"*  
(p83).

At least six types of perceived risk emerged from the works of Cox (1967) and Cunningham (1967a). In categorising types of perceived risk Roselius' (1971) and Jacoby and Kaplans' (1972) works appear to be extensions of what Cox and Cunningham already identified. In particular, Roselius classified risk in four categories, in terms of 'loss' including, time loss, hazard loss, ego-loss and money loss. Alternatively, Jacoby and Kaplan (1972) attempted to identify the various types of risk referred to in the literature and classify them into five categories, albeit ignoring the factor of loss highlighted by Cox and Cunningham. The authors proposed an overall perceived risk (OPR) measure consisting of five independent types of risk including financial risk, performance risk, social risk, psychological risk and physical risk. This view of OPR suggests that in buying situations consumers might be engaging in "risk trade-off" behaviour. For example they purchase a product to reduce social or psychological risk, but at the same time increasing financial risk (Jacoby and Kaplan, 1972).

The notion of perceived risk is based on the idea that, in a purchase situation the consumer faces uncertainty about the outcome of a choice [among a set of brands] and a concern about the consequences of a poor decision (Taylor 1974; Ross 1975; Havlena and DeSarbo, 1991; Stem et al 1977; Dowling and Staelin, 1994). A reduction in perceived risk is achieved by increasing certainty and/or reducing the consequences (Cox, 1967, Roselius, 1971). However, it is wrong to think that consumers attempt to reduce risk in buying situations. The term 'perceived' implies a rather personal and subjective identification of the risk in a buying situation, which varies among individuals. As such it is more appropriate to use the word 'risk-handling' when referring to how the consumers deal with their perceived risk.

#### Risk handling and risk-reduction methods

Risk handling is viewed as a risk-reduction process (Stem et al, 1977) and it refers to:

*"The process of reducing perceived pre-purchased risk by using risk reduction methods until the level of risk perceived reaches a level which is tolerable to the individual consumer and is consisted with his purchase goals" (p315).*

In their attempt to handle risk, consumers have to deal with uncertainty and consequences. Since it is not possible to predict the consequences of a purchase at a pre-purchase stage, the attention focuses on the attempt to reduce the uncertainty. According to Cox (1967), this can be achieved through information handling (e.g. information acquisition, information processing, information transmission). By focusing on reducing the uncertainty, consumers are inclined to perceive more

favourable consequences of their purchases. In addition, more specific 'strategies' have been suggested as a means of reducing uncertainty. Specifically, Bauer (1960) argued that

*"Consumers characteristically develop decision strategies and ways of reducing risk that enable them to act with relative confidence and ease in situations where their information is inadequate and the consequences of their actions are in some meaningful sense incalculable" (p25).*

The author suggests that one of the preferred methods employed by consumers to reduce risk is brand loyalty,

*"I would predict a strong correlation between degree of risk and brand loyalty" (p26).*

Cunningham (1967b) and Roselius (1971) supported this proposition. Other methods of risk-reduction include responding to advertising (Cox, 1967; Barach, 1969) and word-of-mouth communication (Cunningham, 1964; Roselius, 1971). Roselius proposed eleven methods of reducing perceived risk (table 3.1).

Although much of the research on perceived risk is concerned with the idea of reducing perceived risk (e.g. Roselius, 1971), Cox (1967) suggested that there are instances where the consumer seeks to increase risk by searching for dissonant information. Specifically in purchase situations where perceived risk is 'low' consumers are said to enhance it as a way of relieving boredom (Deering and Jacoby, 1972).

**Table 3.1 Eleven methods of risk relief**

1. **Endorsements:** buy the brand whose advertising has endorsements or testimonials from a person like you, from a celebrity, or from an expert on the product.
2. **Brand Loyalty:** buy the brand you have used before and have been satisfied with in the past.
3. **Major Brand Image:** buy a major, well-known brand of the product and rely on reputation of the brand.
4. **Private Testing:** buy whichever brand has been tested and approved by a private testing company.
5. **Store Image:** buy the brand that is carried by a store which you think is dependable, and rely on reputation of the store.
6. **Free Sample:** use a free sample of the product on a trial basis before buying.
7. **Money-back Guarantee:** buy whichever brand offers a money-back guarantee with the product.
8. **Government Testing:** buy the brand that has been tested and approved by an official branch of the government.
9. **Shopping:** shop around on your own and compare product features on several brand in several stores.
10. **Expensive Model:** buy the most expensive and elaborate model of the product.
11. **Word of Mouth:** ask friends or family for advice about the product.

Source: Roselius, (1971)

In addition, risk may be perceived in all product purchase situations, for example, expensive products as well as for more inexpensive routine products such as groceries (Cox 1967). Irrespective of the product, perceived risk is likely to be affected by other factors, for example situational factors such as interpersonal surroundings (group opinion), time factors, and goal structure. (Vincent and Zikmund, 1976). This rationale is based on the idea that certain buying situations are more likely to influence perceived risk. For example, in a buying situation where a gift is bought for another person, the amount of risk perceived by the consumer differs from the amount perceived if the same product was bought for personal use. Also, each buying situation is likely to relate to different types of risk. Where the product is bought as a gift, the consumer is likely to perceive more social risk, while if it is bought for



personal use, the consumer will be more concerned with the performance of the product.

#### Perceived risk and involvement

Perceived risk has been associated with many concepts in consumer behaviour (e.g. information search, brand loyalty etc.) but increasingly with the construct of involvement. Involvement has been found to determine the amount of behavioural activities during the choice process, e.g. response involvement (Houston and Rothschild, 1978; Kapferer and Laurent 1985a; Richins and Bloch, 1986). At the same time, perceived risk has been found to be linked with information handling, e.g. information search and acquisition (Cox, 1967). This implies that there might be a relationship between the two constructs. Although many researchers have identified this relationship, only a few have attempted to discuss it in more depth (e.g. Dholakia, 1997; Chaudhuri, 2000). A review of the extant literature has revealed that researchers have treated the two concepts in various ways. In particular, perceived risk appears as,

- A dimension of involvement (Laurent and Kapferer 1985a; Kapferer and Laurent, 1985b).
- A consequence of involvement (Dowling and Staelin, 1994; Chaudhuri, 2000).
- An antecedent of involvement (Batra and Ray, 1983; Day et al, 1995)

- A moderator of the relationship between involvement and information search (Chaudhuri, 2000).

Further, perceived risk and involvement are found to share some similarities (Dholakia, 1997). Both constructs incorporate the element of importance. In particular, importance is a part of the enduring conceptualisations of involvement and stems from the work of Howard and Sheth (1969). Chapter 6, discusses the use of importance as a dimension of involvement. At the same time, one of the perceived risk components is the 'importance of the consequences' of a purchase situation (Bettman, 1972).

Information search has also been found to be linked with both constructs. For the involvement construct, information search appears to be a consequence while for perceived risk a risk-reduction strategy. It is apparent that involvement, perceived risk and information search are somehow related. Dowling and Staelin (1994) proposed that perceived risk mediates the relationship between involvement and information search. Chaudhuri (2000) attempted to empirically test this relationship<sup>8</sup> and found substantial evidence that perceived risk mediates the effect of the importance element of involvement on information search.

Similarly, Dholakia (1997) investigated the relationship between involvement and perceived risk by focusing on the various types of risk (e.g. financial, social etc.) and

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<sup>8</sup> The author focus on the importance and hedonic elements of involvement and their relation to perceived risk.

their effect on the importance component of enduring involvement. The author found that perceived risk types explained a significant portion of the enduring importance component of involvement.

#### Perceived risk and brand loyalty

Another construct which appears to be related with perceived risk is brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is seen as a 'device' or strategy to reduce various risks associated with consumer decisions (Bauer 1960). In addition, in examining how the consumer handles perceived risk, brand loyalty is viewed as a risk reduction method (Roselius, 1971). Although both constructs have received profound attention in consumer behaviour, only a minimal attempt has been made to deeply examine their relationship. Cunningham (1967b) examined the degree to which brand loyalty is a function of perceived risk. The author found that perceived risk is positively related to brand loyalty. As a result brand loyalty appears to be a method of reducing perceived risk. Also, the more serious the perceived consequences of a choice the higher the probability of brand loyalty.

#### 3.3.1.3. Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty (BL) represents one of the most 'controversial' subjects in consumer behaviour and is, as Bauer (1960) noted, '*one of our traditional problems*' (p25). A review of the extant literature reveals the confusion surrounding the conceptual nature of BL (Odin et al, 2001) as well as its multiple operational treatments (discussed in detail in chapter 6).

The study of BL is characterised by a divergence of two schools of thought; the stochastic and the deterministic. As already discussed in chapter 2, the stochastic approach considers certain behavioural manifestations. In this case BL is considered as a random phenomenon that is too complex to comprehend (Bass 1974). In contrast, the deterministic approach suggests that BL is explainable. Jacoby and Kyner (1973) state,

*"If brand loyalty were a random event, there would be no purpose in making it the object of applied scientific inquiry"* (p2).

Initial attempts to understand BL have concentrated on various operational treatments which fail to provide an understanding of its conceptual nature (e.g. Cunningham, 1956; Tucker 1964; McConnell, 1968; Ehrenberg, 1964; Ehrenberg and Goodhardt, 1970). Woodside and Clokey (1975) argue that,

*"The concept of brand loyalty has been defined by most researchers empirically instead of theoretically, a few researchers have stated that the empirical definition of brand loyalty is the theoretical definition"* (p175).

Many researchers seem to agree with this statement (e.g. Sheth and Park, 1974; Jacoby 1971; Jacoby and Kyner 1973; Day 1969, 1970; Newman and Werbel, 1973; Lutz and Winn, 1974; Gentry and Brown, 1980; Prakash 1993; Dick and Basu, 1994; Baldinger and Robinson 1996; Dubois and Laurent, 1999).

More than fifty different operational definitions have been identified in the literature by Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) who state,

*"We see BL measurement in chaos and characterised by many problems" (p65).*

The authors suggested that a reason for this chaos, which indicates the lack of progress in understanding BL, is the absence of an explicit and 'agreed-upon' conceptual definition of BL to guide the empirical research. The objective of scientific research is to develop conceptual definitions which will precede and guide operational ones (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978). However, much of the research output has been preoccupied with the question of 'how to measure' omitting the question of 'what is to measure?' An explicit example is Ehrenberg (1972) who states,

*"First we need to understand rather precisely what it is that we would want to explain- e.g. how people buy, before we can successfully consider why" (p5).*

In contrast to Ehrenberg (1972) Jacoby and Kyner (1973) state,

*"While operational definitions may be sufficient for specifying how to measure brand loyalty and may, under certain conditions, enable one to make reasonably good predictions regarding future buying behaviour, they are quite arbitrary and provide nothing more than a surface understanding" (p1).*

Various researchers have over the time recognised this pattern and pleaded for a re-evaluation of brand loyalty (Dick and Basu, 1994).

In addition, the 'nomology'<sup>9</sup> of BL in the behavioural theory is not well-established (Jacoby, 1971; Dick and Basu, 1994). For example, little attention has been devoted to examining its relationship with other constructs such as involvement, perceived risk, brand commitment and information search.

#### Repeat purchase behaviour and brand loyalty

Ehrenberg (1972) defines repeat purchase behaviour (RPB) as,

*"Any situation where a person buys the item in question more than once" (p2).*

Following this definition, all behavioural manifestations that fulfil such a premise (e.g. brand loyalty, inertia, and spurious loyalty) are considered a form of RPB. Most of the literature in this area makes no attempt to clarify various forms of RPB. In particular, Lutz and Winn (1974) state,

*"...it can be argued that most of the literature on brand loyalty can be more accurately regarded as pertaining to repeat purchase behaviour only" (p104).*

The distinction between brand loyalty and repeat purchase behaviour is an important one and according to Jacoby and Kyner (1973) lies in the antecedents of brand loyalty. In some instances it seems that RPB may be the result of a psychological commitment with a brand. However in different instances it may be a function of

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<sup>9</sup> The relationship of BL with other concepts/variables.

other factors (e.g. to reduce perceived risk). This highlights the need to distinguish BL from other forms of RPB in the consumer behaviour literature.

#### Defining brand loyalty

An initial attempt to distinguish brand loyalty from repeat purchase behaviour was made by Jacoby and Kyner (1973) who proposed a multi-dimensional conceptual definition of BL that consists of six points:

*"Brand loyalty is the biased (e.g. non-random) behavioural response (e.g. purchase) expressed over time, by some decision-making unit with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and is a function of psychological (decision making, evaluative) processes" [(p2), also Jacoby, 1971; Jacoby and Chestnut 1978].*

This conceptual definition recognises that BL is but one form of RBP and distinguishes the two based on their inherent motivations (antecedents) using the concept of brand commitment. All six conditions (requirements) have to co-exist, since collectively they distinguish BL from other forms of RPB. The conditions are discussed below:

- A "biased" behavioural response implies that it is necessary to have a systematic non-random behavioural tendency towards a brand or a number of brands. This means that brand choice should not follow a zero-order process. BL entails statements of preference/intention to buy, accompanied by biased behavioural act.

Both behavioural and attitudinal components are required to capture the notion of BL (Jacoby and Kyner 1973; Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978).

- Expressed over time implies a consistency of the purchase act over time. An isolated incident of biased toward a brand does not constitute BL. The condition of duration is absolutely necessary.
- By some decision-maker unit which can be either the user or the purchaser of the product, an individual, a household or an organisation.
- One or more alternative brands out of a set of brands suggests a) the consumer can be loyal to one or more brands out of a set of brands that are acceptable to him/her and which constitute the 'evoked set' (Howard and Sheth, 1969), b) the buyer must be able to choose among alternatives as such the number of alternatives within a product category is very important. BL can not exist where there is a monopoly situation.
- A function of a psychological process implies the idea that a commitment towards the brand is an essential element of BL. Buyers should have positive attitudes (positive affect) towards the brand (brand commitment) which leads to repurchase of the brand in question (Mellens et al 1996).



In support, Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) state,

*"The concept of commitment provides an essential basis for distinguishing between brand loyalty and other forms of repeat purchase behaviour and holds promise for assessing the relative degrees of brand loyalty" (p84).*

This conceptualisation combines the stochastic and deterministic elements by integrating 'observed' behaviour with the notion of attitude in the same conceptual context. It is a formalisation of the attempts of Day (1969, 1970) who treated brand loyalty using both behavioural and attitudinal measures. In addition, this definition has found widespread support in the consumer behaviour research and is considered the most elaborate (Mellens et al, 1996; Rundle-Thiele and Bennet, 2001). On the other hand, it has received criticism, especially from Tarpey (1974, 1975) who argues that,

*"[The definition] does not deal with the causative factors since it fails to explain anything about why consumers behave in any particular fashion" (p214).*

The author argued that Jacoby and Kyner (1973) attempt only empirically to distinguish brand loyalty from repeat purchase behaviour and that they omit to specify the degree of commitment to which RBP can be meaningfully designated.

Similarly, Engel et al (1973) viewed brand loyalty as the 'preferential' attitudinal and behavioural response towards a brand [or more], over a period of time. This definition

explicitly indicates the notion of preference, as an important prerequisite for BL compared to the Jacoby and Kyner whose notion of 'biased' does not essentially imply preference. The integration of behaviour with attitude gained many supporters including Woodside and Clokey (1975) who defined brand loyalty as,

*"A recursive relationship between attitude and behaviour"*  
(p178).

In their review of the brand loyalty research Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) concluded that both behaviour and attitude should be combined to present a picture of what constitutes BL. In spite of this, many researchers have chosen to follow the behavioural route (e.g. Elrod, 1988, Colombo and Morrison, 1989; Dekimpe et al, 1997).

#### Brand loyalty typologies

Sheth and Park (1974) attempted to distinguish various forms of brand loyalty in their definition, which has similarities with that of Jacoby and Kyner.

*"We define brand loyalty as a positive biased emotive, evaluative and/or behavioural response tendency toward a branded labelled or graded alternative or choice by an individual in his capacity as the user, the choice maker, and/or purchasing agent"* (p449-50).

According to this definition a consumer may be brand loyal even though s/he may never purchase the brands (e.g. the case of children). The authors create a 'typology'

by identifying seven types of BL which are based on three dimensions. The dimensionality of BL may be as simple as one dimension or as complex as all three dimensions, depending on the consumer and the product class. The following dimensions have been identified which emerge from the above conceptual definition:

- Emotive tendency [towards the brand], which captures the notion of attitude towards a brand, e.g. like-dislike continuum, affective attitude manifested more in favour of one brand in the market.
- Evaluative tendency [towards the brand] which refers to the evaluation of a brand based on certain criteria which describe the utility of the brand (e.g. instrumental/utilitarian attitudes).
- Behavioural tendency [towards the brand] which refers to the 'biased procurement' or purchase of a brand and includes all the physical activities of shopping and consumption (e.g. search, payment etc.).

Based on these dimensions Sheth and Park (1974) distinguished seven different types of brand loyalty (table 3.2)

**Table 3.2 Seven types of brand loyalty**

- |   |
|---|
| 1. Behavioural brand loyalty                    |
| 2. Behavioural-evaluative brand loyalty         |
| 3. Behavioural-emotive brand loyalty            |
| 4. Behavioural-evaluative-emotive brand loyalty |
| 5. Evaluative brand loyalty                     |
| 6. Evaluative-emotive brand loyalty             |
| 7. Emotive brand loyalty                        |

Source: Adapted from Sheth and Park (1974)

Similar typologies have been suggested by Kapferer and Laurent (1984), Dick and Basu (1994) and Rundle-Thiele and Bennet (2001). In particular, Kapferer and Laurent developed a typology, which includes nine scenarios of brand sensitivity, which they used to classify various markets (products). Similarly, Rundle-Thiele and Bennet suggest a classification of BL by market type, while Dick and Basu identify four situations of BL based on the relationship between attitude and behaviour including, 1) No loyalty, 2) Spurious loyalty, 3) Latent loyalty and 4) Loyalty.

#### Brand loyalty, brand commitment and involvement

Although used interchangeably (e.g. Cunningham, 1967b, Beatty et al, 1988), brand loyalty (BL) and brand commitment (BC) are two different concepts (Worrington and Shim, 2000). Following the use of BC to distinguish BL from repeat purchase behaviour by Jacoby and Kyner, (1973) BC has received some attention as a distinct concept.

*"This paper represents.....in the hopes of improving the*

*understanding of the reasons for brand loyalty or brand commitment"* (Cunningham 1967b, 507).

The author used a measure of 'perceived' BC [formed by two questions]<sup>10</sup> to classify three groups of respondents on a continuum of high, low and ambiguous perceived BC. While BL is most often viewed as a behavioural phenomenon, BC is said to have an attitudinal nature. Brand commitment is defined as,

*"The pledging or binding of an individual to his brand choice"*  
(Lastovicka and Gardner 1979, p68).

According to Traylor (1981), the definition implies,

*"A psychological attachment to a particular brand within a product class"* (p51).

BC is said to reflect BL (e.g. antecedent) however the reverse is not possible (Traylor 1981; Beatty et al, 1988; Worrington and Shim, 2000). As such, a brand loyal customer may switch to a different brand under stock-out conditions however, the brand-committed consumer is likely to delay purchase, seek the brand elsewhere or choose a different packaging (size/quantity) of that brand (Traylor 1981; Worrington and Shim, 2000). Although the need to examine these two constructs more closely has been acknowledged, little conceptual or empirical effort has so far been devoted.

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<sup>10</sup> 1) "Do you regularly switch around or buy the same brand of (product)", and 2) "What would you do if your present brand of (product) was out of stock-buy another brand, go to another store, or wait until the next trip?"

### Brand commitment and involvement

Further, brand commitment (BC) has been linked with the concept of involvement. In particular, BC has been seen as, a component of involvement (Lastovicka and Gardner 1979), equivalent to involvement (Robertson, 1976) and as a distinct concept from involvement (Finn, 1983; Traylor 1981 and 1983; Muncy and Hunt 1984; Crosby and Taylor, 1983; Mitchell, 1979; Gill et al 1988; Beatty et al, 1988; Worrington and Shim, 2000; Dholakia 1997; Grossbart et al, 1987).

Initially, in social psychology there is reference to involvement as 'a commitment to a position or concern with a specific stand on an issue' (Freedman 1964). As discussed earlier in the chapter, involvement originated from the notion of ego-involvement in social psychology, where a distinction between ego-involvement and commitment has never been completely resolved (Muncy and Hunt, 1984).

Worrington and Shim (2000) state,

*"Although involvement has been theoretically linked to brand commitment, there is an apparent lack of consensus regarding the nature of the relationship between the two constructs" (p262).*

There are many instances in consumer behaviour where BC is seen as equivalent to or as a component of involvement (e.g. Lastovicka and Gardner 1979; Robertson, 1976). Although related, involvement and BC are conceptually distinct (Mitchell 1979; Traylor, 1981; Finn 1983; Gill et al, 1988; Worrington and Shim 2000).

The dominant view in the consumer behaviour domain is that involvement and BC are not the same thing. The distinction lies on the fact that involvement is seen as implying no reference to a specific position (Traylor 1981; Grossbart et al, 1987; Beatty et al, 1988). For example, a consumer may be highly involved with a product class without being committed to a specific brand (Traylor 1981, 1983).

Further, involvement is seen as proceeding BC and a positive relationship between the two is identified, which might lead to brand loyalty.

*"The higher the involvement, the greater the commitment and, hence, loyalty to a brand" (Traylor, 1981 p52).*

Beatty et al (1988), Crosby and Taylor (1983) share the same view. In relation to this, Traylor (1983) suggested that there are situations where high involvement is coupled with low brand commitment and vice-versa. The two concepts can be thought of as forming a continuum on which distributions of consumers can be plotted for specific market categories.

**Figure 3.2 Continuum of brand commitment and product involvement**



Source: Traylor (1983)

#### Brand loyalty and inertia

Brand inertia is another concept closely related to brand loyalty (BL). Initially, Jeuland (1979) defined brand choice inertia as a form of short-term loyalty. The author states,

*"Brand behaviour inertia would have its origin in the costs associated with switching as switching implies breaking a simple routinised pattern of behaviour and thus may lead to increased uncertainty or perceived risks" (p679).*

Attempts to distinguish inertia from BL are non-existent with the exception perhaps of Odin et al, (2001) and Huang and Yu (1999). In addition, there is a lack of conceptualisation of inertia. Researchers view inertia as the phenomenon where for some consumers a purchase of a brand increases the probability that the brand will be purchased on the next occasion (Bawa, 1990). Besides the term 'inertia' this

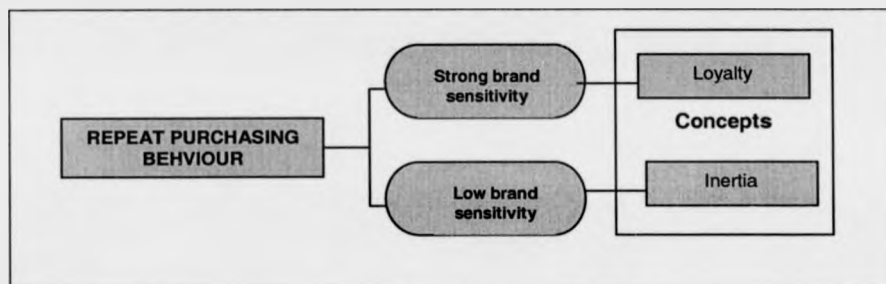


phenomenon is referred to as learning, last-purchased loyalty, variety avoiding, and reinforcement behaviour (Givon, 1984; Kahn et al, 1986). It is a form of repeat purchase behaviour and although not much knowledge exists about its nature, it is widely agreed among researchers that its motivations are different from those of BL. Inertia is said to result from the satisfaction obtained from the consumption of a brand or as a strategy to routinise behaviour so as to minimise the cost of thinking or any perceived risk (Jeuland, 1979; Bawa, 1990; Mellens et al, 1996). Inertia is conceptually similar to the notion of 'spurious loyalty' (Day, 1969; Dick and Basu 1994) which refers to a situation characterised by low perceived differentiation among brands and low involvement with the product. This type of loyalty is said to result from situational cues (e.g. familiarity) and promotional activities (e.g. deals). One of the few studies which deals with distinguishing BL from inertia is Odin et al (2001) who view inertia as,

*"A repeat purchasing of the same brand without a real motive for the choice made" as opposed to BL which occurs "as a result of brand commitment or a favourable attitude towards the brand" (78).*

The authors separate BL from inertia using the concept of 'brand sensitivity' developed by Kapferer and Laurent (1984). The following illustration (figure 3.3) epitomises the view that repeat purchase behaviour under conditions of strong brand sensitivity is termed BL while repeat purchase behaviour under conditions of weak brand sensitivity is termed inertia.

**Figure 3.3 The use of brand sensitivity to distinguish loyalty from inertia**



Source: Odin et al (2001)

In addition, where BL is observed, the consumer is said to attach great importance to the brands in his choice and be able to differentiate among existing brands. The opposite is true, where the consumer is inert.

#### Brand sensitivity

The concept of brand sensitivity (BS) was developed in France by Kapferer and Laurent and maintains that a consumer is brand sensitive to the extent that the brand name plays a major role in the decision process and brand choice in a given product class (Kapferer and Laurent, 1984). The authors developed a 'synthetic index of brand sensitivity' which can be used to measure BS across different product markets (e.g. champagne, washing machines etc.).

It is argued that although similar, BS and brand loyalty (BL) are two different notions since BS is primarily a psychological concept and BL denotes systematic repurchase. The authors suggest that in various product categories it is possible to observe

repurchase without sensitivity and vice-versa. Based on three factors (purchase behaviour, brand sensitivity and nature of purchase based on choice criteria etc.) the authors developed a typology of nine 'scenarios of sensitivity' (e.g. considered loyalty, fixation, pseudo-loyalty etc.).

Further, brand sensitivity is said to be influenced by involvement and a number of other factors such as perceived risk and perceived difference between brands. Kapferer and Laurent (1984) viewed BL as a simple behavioural activity. However, in order to account for a psychological element in their view, they developed the notion of BS. BS appears to be closely related to brand commitment (table 3.3).

**Table 3.3 Similarities between brand sensitivity and brand commitment**

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The concept of involvement is said to precede and influence both brand commitment and brand sensitivity.</li><li>2. Both concepts are viewed as related but conceptually distinct from brand loyalty.</li><li>3. Both brand commitment and brand sensitivity are regarded as psychological concepts.</li><li>4. Both brand commitment and brand sensitivity are said to lead to brand loyalty.</li></ol> |
|---|

Another attempt to distinguish between inertia and brand loyalty comes from Huang and Yu (1999), who use the degree of inter-correlation of the evoked sets (set inter-correlation) to identify degrees of brand loyalty and inertia in terms of the substitutability of evoked brands. The authors define inertia as,

*"A nonconscious process where consumers simply buy the same brand out of habit" (p525).*

Based on the degree (low, moderate, high) of the set inter-correlation (SI), which indicates the degree of substitutability of similarity/difference between brands in the evoked set, the authors propose that a moderate level of SI indicates brand loyalty. A moderate level denotes also preference towards a single brand and a propensity to stick with that brand for a while. On the other hand, high or low SI indicate brand switching for different reasons. For example, high SI consumers switch for the sake of variety while low SI switch in order to achieve maximum utility.

#### 3.3.1.4 Perceived brand similarities/differences

The topic of perceived brand similarities/differences has received little attention in consumer behaviour. Muncy (1990) states,

*"I believe that product class perceived similarities (or differences) is a topic that will inevitably receive the amount of attention that involvement has recently received" (p146).*

Currently, perceived brand similarity is viewed as a component of brand choice (decision-making) and thought to be linked with brand loyalty (e.g. Huang and Yu 1999), inertia (Huang and Yu 1999) brand sensitivity (Kapferer and Laurent 1984) and involvement (Robertson, 1976; DeBruicker, 1979). Initially, consumers perceive a brand based on the values of its attributes that determine the utility of the brand. When asked to judge the similarity between brands, consumers use retrieved information from memory (acquired through prior experiences) and current information presented during the task. (Bijmolt et al, 1998). Where the attributes of

two brands score the same values, the brands are perceived to be relatively similar (common attributes). Alternatively, where attributes score different values, the brands are perceived as dissimilar (distinctive attributes). A combination of the common and distinctive attributes enables the consumer to form a perceived judgement of the similarity/difference between the brands (Trevsky, 1977).

Further, in the area of information processing (hierarchy-of-effects model) perceived brand similarity is seen as a key mediating variable interacting with involvement to establish a typology of information processing models (Ray, 1973; Robertson, 1976; DeBruicker, 1979). The hierarchy-of-effects model suggests that in a purchase situation the consumer is assumed to progress through a sequence of stages: awareness, comprehension, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption. The low-involvement hierarchy suggests that under certain conditions the above sequence is likely to collapse. Ray (1973) suggested three forms of hierarchy of effects determined by the levels of involvement and perceived brand similarity:

1. The standard hierarchy of effects termed 'the learning model' (Cognitive-Affecting-Conative).
2. The dissonance-attribution model (Conative-Affective-Cognitive).
3. The low-involvement model (Cognitive-Conative-Affective).

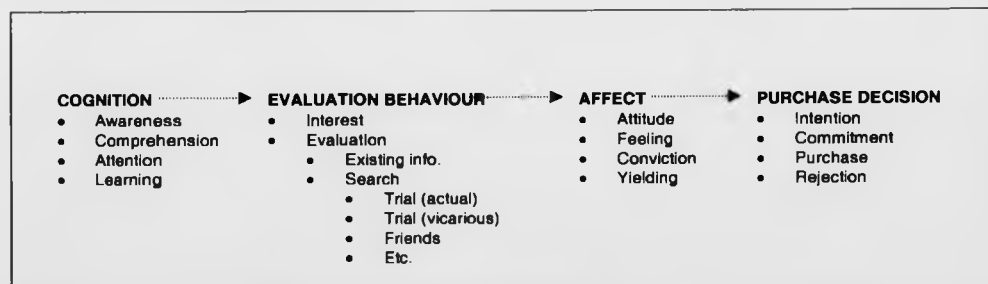
The idea of this three-form typology is that the traditional learning hierarchy (Cognitive-Affecting-Conative) can only be applied under conditions of high

involvement and strong perceived brand similarity. In situations of low involvement and weak perceived brand similarity, the hierarchies are as follows:

1. Where high involvement and low perceived brand similarity, the dissonance-attribution hierarchy applies in which behaviour occurs first (conative, e.g. product trials) followed by attitude/feeling (affective) and the awareness and comprehension (cognitive).
2. Where low involvement and regardless the level of perceived brand similarity, the low-involvement model applies in which awareness and comprehension (cognitive) precede the conative element (product trial etc.) and attitude/feeling (affective).

Moreover, DeBruicker (1979) modified the low-involvement model by collapsing the affect element (e.g. cognitive-conative). The modified model is said to apply in situations of low involvement and low perceived brand similarity. The low-involvement hierarchy received criticism from Finn (1982, 1983) who suggested a single hierarchy model (figure 3.4).

**Figure 3.4 The single hierarchy model**



Source: Finn (1982)

While the low-involvement hierarchy suggests a behaviour-before-attitude sequence, where trial is viewed as a means of information for forming brand beliefs, Finn (1982, 1983) argues that trial as a search mechanism does not apply only to low involvement cases. It is possible that high involvement situations lead to a behaviour-before-attitude sequence. In figure 3.4, trial represents a single option in the evaluation stage of consumer behaviour.

#### 3.3.1.5 Dependence on sensation

Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) suggest that brand choices that are dependent on sensations (e.g. taste) are more likely to induce variety-seeking behaviour. The authors do not explain further, nor they discuss the origin and background of this notion. Dependence on sensation appears to originate from research formalised by Hirschman and Holbrook (1982; also Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). The authors introduced the concept of 'hedonic consumption', which refers to

*"Those facets of consumer behaviour that relate to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one's experience with products"* (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982, p92).

In trying to understand and predict consumer behaviour, researchers have developed various models that represent the consumer as a logical thinker looking for information in order to make a brand choice. Following the economic view, consumers choose brands based on their desires to maximise utility where utility is a function of the product attributes. This perspective, which is ubiquitous among

researchers, is known as the 'cognitive' process (Venkatraman and MacInnis 1985), 'the information-processing model' (Bettman, 1979), the 'instrumental view' (Havlena and Holbrook, 1986) or the 'utilitarian' perspective (Spangenberg et al, 1997). However, some concerns have been expressed on the grounds that this perspective does not capture certain consumer behaviour phenomena (Olshavsky and Granbois, 1979; Kassarian, 1978; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). In particular, Olshavsky and Granbois (1979) suggested that a substantial proportion of purchases does not involve a decision process:

*"Purchases can occur out of necessity; they can be derived from culturally-mandated lifestyles or from interlocked purchases; they can reflect preferences acquired in early childhood; they can result from simple conformity to group norms or from imitation of others; purchases can be made exclusively on recommendations from personal or non-personal sources; they can be made on the basis of surrogates of various types; or they can even occur on a random or superficial basis" (p98).*

Such phenomena include various activities for leisure, sensory pleasures, esthetic enjoyment and emotional responses (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Hedonic consumption as proposed by Hirschman and Holbrook, deals with such phenomena as opposed to the traditional view of cognitive decision making. However it does not seek to replace the traditional theory, but to extend it. Using the hedonic view, products are seen as subjective symbols and not as objective entities and researchers are more concerned with what the product represents rather than what it is (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982).



Hedonic consumption is a relatively new field of study in consumer behaviour as such, research in this area is quite limited. Researchers looking into this area are concerned with the distinction between traditional and hedonic view (e.g. Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), by categorising consumers based on their predisposition to seek experiences (e.g. Venkatraman and MacInnis 1984). [The authors identified four groups of individuals, a) hedonic individuals, b) cognitive individuals, c) experience seekers and d) experience avoiders]. In addition, various researchers have used experiential products as their object of study in particular, Lacher (1989) used music, Cooper-Martin (1991) used movies and Kahn et al (1997) experimented with songs. Other research attempts to categorise products in relation to their hedonic value (Chaudhuri, 1993).

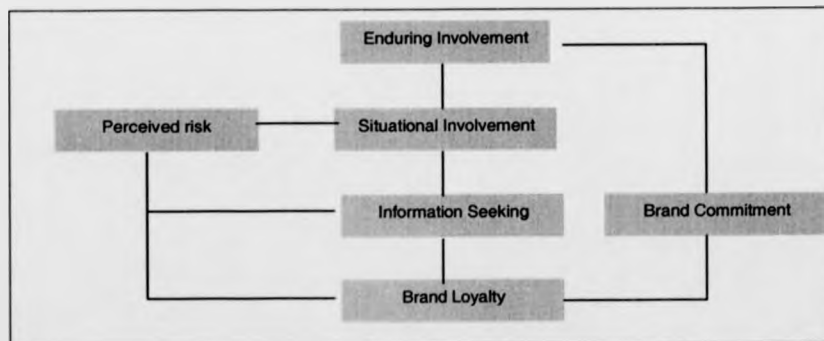
The current state of the research in the area of hedonic consumption posit the great limitations with the regard to its conceptualisation and measurement. There is some concern as to the methodological limitations of the hedonic consumption paradigm expressed by Hudson and Murray (1986). The authors suggest that given the fact that the paradigm emphasises the subjective value of consumption, certain objective research methods designed to control extraneous variables across a population may not be appropriate (Hudson and Murray, 1986). Further, there is inconsistency between the assumptions of the hedonic paradigm (e.g. subjectivity) and the research methods used broadly in consumer behaviour e.g. objectivist approach.

Dependence on sensation (or hedonism) represents the last construct of the Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) exploratory purchase behaviour model. This model, represents the basis on which the 'thesis' framework is developed and examined in the context of this research.

### 3.4 Summary of the chapter

Brand switching is examined in relation to internal and external motivations in the Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) theoretical model. The authors propose that individual difference characteristics as well as objective and perceived product characteristics mediate the occurrence of brand switching. A number of product variables are reviewed including involvement, perceived risk, brand loyalty, brand similarity and hedonism. These variables are conceptually distinct, yet they appear to be related. For example, involvement seems to relate to perceived risk and brand loyalty. In addition, the concept of commitment and information seeking appear to mediate these relationships (figure 3.5).

**Figure 3.5 Relationships between product variables**



#### **4.0 RETAIL PATRONAGE**

Early research in consumer behaviour has exclusively dealt with brand choice behaviour overlooking the role of retail patronage. Since then, considerable research has been developed in the area of store patronage behaviour, with several authors focusing on comparing store versus catalogue shoppers on the basis of their demographic profiles and shopping orientations. In addition, the growth of in-home shopping has shifted the research attention towards non-store patronage, where researchers focused on an expanded array of formats including catalogues, direct mail, telephone, direct selling, and more recently interactive digital television and electronic shopping. With the proliferation of shopping channels the consumer traditional choice set of channel alternatives is further expanded. As a result, the notion of the channel becomes more meaningful and worthy of additional research attention in addressing its potential role in consumer brand choice behaviour.

##### **4.1 Retail patronage behaviour**

Various authors have highlighted the limitations of early consumer behaviour research to focus on retail patronage (e.g. Darden, 1980; Hawes and Lumpkin, 1986; Settle et al, 1994). In particular, Monroe and Gultinan (1975) state,

*"A careful search of the literature on buyer behaviour reveals surprisingly little knowledge of how people choose the store in which to shop" (p19).*

This is only natural if one considers that traditionally consumers had a relatively limited choice of stores for their shopping. Ever since the evolution of shopping centres and the emergence of alternative retail formats (e.g. superstores, discount stores, speciality stores etc.), research attention is shifted towards comparing the new store formats and investigating retail store patronage motives (e.g. Bucklin, 1980; Crask, 1980; Matthews, 1980; Pennington, 1980). Researchers are primarily focused on the relationship between shopping orientations and store patronage. Shopping orientations refer to specific psychographic and lifestyle variables and are often viewed on the basis of consumers activities, interests and opinions and help in understanding patronage intentions (e.g. Wells, 1975). Following Stone (1954)<sup>11</sup>, various authors have classified consumers into stereotypes on the basis of their shopping orientations or shopping style (e.g. Stephenson, 1969; Darden and Reynolds, 1971; Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980).

In addition, various models have been developed in an attempt to capture retail patronage behaviour. These models vary to the extent that they use different determinants to predict and explain store choice, including demographic and socio-economic factors, behavioural factors and attitudes relating to store image, store performance and store attributes (e.g. Stephenson, 1969; McKay, 1972; Arnold et al, 1983; Darden, 1980). The variation among the retail patronage models is the result of the fact that various authors borrowed models of related theories to explain retail patronage.

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<sup>11</sup> Stone was the first to classify consumers on the basis of their shopping orientations.

In particular, Evans et al (1996) used the Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) model of reasoned action, Wee and Pearce (1985) based their model on Huff's (1981) gravity model of consumer spatial behaviour while Arnold et al (1983) utilised the multinomial logit model (e.g. Gensch and Recker, 1979; Punj and Staelin, 1978).

This variability is also the result of the many problems in retailing literature emphasised by Hirschman and Stampfl (1980). The authors refer to the limitations in the focus of the definition of retailing, and further, the deficiency of rigorous theoretical frameworks. Similarly, Bellenger and Moschis (1981), state that there is no unified theory or model in this area and therefore research findings are incomparable, difficult to summarise and generalisations difficult to achieve. The authors highlight that,

*"A need exists for a general model or models of retail patronage such as those used in brand choice research. The lack of such a general framework has made the research and resulting knowledge in the field difficult to assimilate and thus difficult to translate into meaningful retail strategies or directions of additional study" (p373).*

Further, the literature on retail patronage devotes some attention in examining in-home shopping, specifically patronage of non-store formats, (e.g. Rosenberg and Hirschman, 1980; Darian, 1987). The following section focuses in the discussion of non-store retail patronage.

#### 4.2 Non-store retail patronage

Following the study of Cox and Rich (1964) on telephone catalogue shopping, early research in the area of non-store patronage focused on establishing demographic profiles of catalogue versus store patrons while addressing the underlying motivations of in-home shopping (e.g. Gillett, 1970; Peters and Ford, 1972; Cunningham and Cunningham, 1973; Reynolds, 1974; Berkowitz et al, 1979). Authors report that 'convenience', is the dominating motive for consumer in-home shopping<sup>12</sup> (e.g. Berkowitz et al, 1979; Cox and Rich, 1964), despite contradicting indications (e.g. Reynolds, 1974). This stream of research reports inconsistent and contradictory findings due to the diversity in the shopping situations studied and the product categories utilised (Jasper and Lan, 1992). Nonetheless, their findings indicate that in-home shoppers differ from store shoppers. Specifically, in-home shoppers are more self-confident, less risk averse, convenience-oriented and flexible, affluent and better educated, from a higher social class and have a higher income, less price conscious and more willing to try new things, less concerned about the approval of others, and active information seekers (e.g. Gillett, 1970; Berkowitz et al, 1979; Stephenson, 1969; Cunningham and Cunningham, 1973; Cox and Rich, 1964).

Following changes in consumer demographic and lifestyle characteristics, (e.g. the increasing number of working women and the lack of time), subsequent research focuses extensively on non-store retailing which according to Korgaonkar (1984) consists of six modes of distribution including, mail-order, telephone, catalogue,

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<sup>12</sup> Much of the early research focused on catalogue patronage as in-home non-store format.

door-to-door selling, vending machines and lastly interactive cable television. In particular, authors investigate consumer patronage of catalogues (Smallwood and Wiener; 1987; Eastlick and Feinberg, 1994 and 1999; Jasper and Lan, 1992; Gehrt and Shim, 1998; Gehrt and Carter, 1992), television (Lincoln and Cunningham 1987; Stephens et al, 1996; Eastlick and Liu 1997) direct selling (Peterson et al, 1989), mail-order (Shim and Drake 1990a), electronic shopping (Shim and Drake, 1990b; Shim and Mahoney, 1991) or a combination (Settle et al, 1994; Korgaonkar, 1984). Most recently there has been a great interest in Internet shopping (Eroglu et al, 2001; Ward and Lee, 2000; Vijayasathy and Jones, 2000; Jones and Vijayasathy, 1998; McQuitty and Peterson, 2000).

#### 4.2.1 Catalogue patronage

Catalogue researchers examine consumers' shopping orientations as a form of explaining catalogue patronage (e.g. Gehrt and Carter, 1992; McDonald, 1995). Consistent with store patronage research most authors in this area attempt to identify shopping orientations and classify catalogues patrons on the basis of them. In particular, Gehrt and Carter, (1992) identify five shopping orientations including catalogue convenience, store recreational, catalogue recreational, merchandise intensive and impulse. Similarly, Gehrt and Shim (1998) classify French consumers into six segments which they term catalogue orientation, store orientation, personalising orientation, aesthetic orientation, merchandise intensive orientation and return concerned orientation.

Other authors utilise different taxonomies in examining catalogue patronage motives. For example, Eastlick and Feinberg (1994 and 1999) focus on the dichotomy between functional and non-functional motives in examining the motivations of catalogue shopping. The authors argue that catalogue shoppers are not only motivated by functional (e.g. tangible) attributes such as convenience, greater merchandise selection, and low prices, but also by other intangible attributes such as, catalogue reputation.

In spite of the on-going growth of catalogue shopping (Gehrt and Shim 1998), from an academic perspective catalogue research seems to be at very early stages. While there is considerable effort in examining its motivations, little attention has been devoted into examining its relationship with various psychological (and behavioural) constructs such as involvement. However, there have been few attempts to examine the role of perceived risk (e.g. Hawes and Lumkin, 1986; Jasper and Ouellette, 1994) and loyalty (e.g. McDonald, 1993; Klassen and Glynn, 1992) in catalogue shopping.

Following the latest addition of electronic shopping into the spectrum of non-store shopping formats, considerable interest has been raised with regard its potential influence in consumer shopping behaviour. The following section focuses on electronic shopping.



#### 4.2.2 Electronic shopping

There are many terms in the literature used over the years to refer to the use of electronic devices for purchasing products. These include, telecommunications retailing (Rosenberg and Hirschman, 1980), electronic retailing (English and Foster, 1983), electronic marketing (Peterson, 1997) electronic shopping (Kelling and McGoldrick, 1995; Burke, 1997a; Peterson et al, 1997; Rowley, 2000) virtual shopping (Burke 1997b), E-commerce (Barwise, 2001), teleshopping (Kelling and McGoldrick, 1995) or interactive home shopping (Alba et al, 1997).

As early as 1980, Rosenberg and Hirschman predicted the future of electronic shopping by stating,

*"Will stores become extinct in American retailing? This article argues that the answer is yes-or, at least, yes for great areas of retailing"(p103).*

Similarly, English and Foster (1983) argued about its impact in the marketplace,

*"Electronic retailing, itself a communications medium, is expected to both increase the level of competition and result in a curtailment of competition. It will increase competition by bringing more options, more alternatives and more competition to the shopper"(153).*

Lately, there have been similar attempts to emphasise the use of the videotext and its prospect of becoming perhaps the prevailing mode of home shopping in the future (e.g. Shim and Drake, 1990b; Shim and Mohoney, 1991). However, despite the on-

going interest on electronic shopping, its potential impact in consumer marketing has been acknowledged since the commercialisation of the Internet. The interest evoked by Internet as a shopping channel is unprecedented and seems to increase rapidly (Peterson et al, 1997). A substantial interest in the Internet's potential value in marketing was initiated since 1996, with a stream of academic research including Hoffman and Novak, (1995, 1996) Novak and Hoffman (1997) Alba et al (1997), Peterson (1997), Peterson et al (1997), Berthon et al (1996), Burke (1997a and 1997b), Ainscough and Luckett (1996) etc. Authors have stressed the potential value of the Internet as a medium for communicating and selling. In addition, Alba et al (1997) emphasise its potential role in affecting the way consumers shop. The authors state that,

*"..it has the potential to change fundamentally the manner in which people shop as well as the structure of the consumer goods and retail industries".*

There is a general agreement that the Internet will establish itself as an alternative retail channel alongside more traditional modes, such as retail stores catalogues and direct mail (Jarvenpaa and Todd, 1997; De Kare Silver, 1998; Jones and Vijayasarathy, 1998; McQuity and Peterson, 2000). It has also been hypothesised that shopping behaviour in this context might be fundamentally different from the shopping behaviour in the traditional retail environment however no formal research exists that theorises the differences (Haubl and Trifts, 2000).

However, there have been a few attempts to examine the profile of Internet shoppers (e.g. Donthu and Garcia, 1999) as well as to assess individuals perceptions and attitudes towards print and Internet catalogue shopping (e.g. Vijayasathy and Jones, 2000). In examining the profile, attitudes and motivational characteristics of Internet shoppers, Donthu and Garcia (1999) found that Internet shoppers are more convenience seekers, more innovating and less risk averse in comparison to non-internet shoppers. The authors reported that Internet shoppers are more impulsive and more variety-seekers than non-shoppers.

Further, Vijayasathy and Jones' results indicate that there are in fact differences in the attitudes towards print and Internet catalogue shopping. The latter appears to be less favourable in terms of risk associated with the security of credit card information, reliability and reproduction of visual image. Similarly, Alba et al, (1997) state that catalogue shopping appears to dominate the Internet.

In spite of these attempts, further research is necessary to understand the role of the Internet in consumer behaviour. From a commercial point of view, it is imperative to examine the profile of Internet shoppers and their underlying motivations and shopping orientations. It is possible to argue that the fact that Internet shoppers appear to differ from non-shoppers (Donthu and Garcia, 1999) may indicate that their shopping orientations differ with respect to the attributes that they consider important in a shopping channel. It is therefore obvious that the Internet shopper will not be susceptible to the same basic strategy that satisfies the catalogue or store shopper.

Similarly, from an academic perspective, the proliferation of the Internet expands the consumer choice of channels, which may in turn have a significant influence in brand choice behaviour.

#### 4.3 The need for further research

While much of the early research in consumer behaviour seems to have focused on product and brand choices, it is important to emphasise that in a purchase situation the selection of a patronage mode is imperative. Consumers can not buy products without considering the retail format (or channel). Research indicates that in some instances consumers choose the retail channel (e.g. store) before considering any particular brands. Darden, (1980) states,

*"There is a strong evidence to suggest that many shopping trips are made to 'buy something' or to 'see what is available'. In all of these instances patronage patterns, or patronage choice, are logically prior to that of the brand choice" (p44).*

Subsequently, since the choice of the channel often appears to precede the choice of the product or brand, it is worthy of additional research attention.

Traditional consumers had a seriously restricted choice of shopping channels. The most prevailing shopping channel was the retail store, which consisted of multiple types including department stores, speciality stores and discount stores. At the same time most of the non-store formats (e.g. telephone catalogue shopping and mail order) were not very popular at the time. Rosenberg and Hirschman, (1980) state,

*"Traditionally, stores served as the primary distribution for retail products because consumers were accustomed to purchasing there, few acceptable alternatives existed, and the value of the consumers' money exceeded the value of their time. Non-store retailing was hindered because of inadequate systems and merchandise display, payment transfers, and purchase delivery"(p106).*

Consumer demographic and lifestyle characteristics have changed significantly since then, including more women in workforce, ethnic diversity, greater value consciousness and shopping on demand (Sheth and Sisodia, 1997). These factors seem to have contributed to the increasing growth in the volume of in-home shopping (Donthu and Garcia, 1999). This growth is also evidenced by the fact that many retailers complement their traditional retail-store operations with catalogues and more recently the Internet and digital television (e.g. Next PLC) while traditional catalogue companies extend their operations to the Internet (e.g. Freemans PLC, La Redoute etc.). Following the recent proliferation of the Internet and digital television, consumers have a wider choice of shopping channels which offer a variety of benefits (Mathwick et al, 2001).

It is therefore evident that the role of the channel becomes increasingly prevailing and perhaps more meaningful than it was previously assumed. There is a great and apparent need to address its role in consumer brand choice behaviour and particularly its relationship with certain psychological and behavioural concepts such as involvement, perceived risk, and loyalty.

## **5.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

As discussed in chapter 4, the proliferation in shopping channels may have a significant influence on consumer behaviour. Given the need for further attention, the present research examines the potential role of the channel and its characteristics in brand switching behaviour. A conceptual framework is developed based on the existing work of Hoyer and Ridgway (1984). As mentioned in chapter 3, the Hoyer and Ridgway theoretical model of purchase exploration was chosen as the basis for the thesis conceptual framework because of various advantages over other alternative models (e.g. Wooside and Clockey 1975; Givon 1984 etc.). In particular, the Hoyer and Ridgway theoretical model distinguishes the internal and external causes of brand switching, something that lacks in other models. In addition, it highlights the mediating role of the product and its characteristics in brand switching. For these reasons it is believed that it represents a more conceptually robust basis on which the thesis conceptual framework can be built.

The conceptual framework proposes that, channel characteristics along with the need for variety and product characteristics influence brand switching behaviour. The notion of channel characteristics, in the context of this research, is new to consumer behaviour. There is no literature that directly supports its theorising, nor any prior research that links the channel characteristics with brand switching behaviour. This is therefore a study which aims at exploring the potential relationship of the channel characteristics in consumer choice, as opposed to offering accurate descriptions

(descriptive research) or specifying the nature of relationships (causal research) (table 5.1).

**Table 5.1 Types of research design**

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Exploratory research:</b> is concerned with discovering the general nature of the problem and the variables that relate to it.</li><li>• <b>Descriptive research:</b> is focused on the accurate description of the variables in the problem model.</li><li>• <b>Causal research:</b> attempts to specify the nature of the functional relationship between two or more variables in the problem model.</li></ul> |
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Source: Tull and Hawkins (1993), p57

A conceptual framework has been developed to examine the role of the channel in brand switching behaviour. It is based on the work of Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) on exploratory purchase behaviour. Their framework, discussed in chapter 3 (page 49), maintains that purchase exploration (brand switching or innovating) is a function of two factors, individual difference characteristics and product characteristics. The authors suggest that individuals possess a variable need for stimulation (optimal stimulation level) which indicates their propensity to look for variety. Literature indicates that individuals with high levels of optimal stimulation have a high propensity to look for variety seeking and vice-versa (Raju, 1980). However, certain product characteristics (objective and perceived) seem to mediate the occurrence of variety-induced brand switching in particular product classes. Based on this, the authors developed a simple typology to exhibit the likelihood of brand switching occurring where certain product characteristics are taken into account (table 5.2).

**Table 5.2 Product characteristics that mediate the expression of brand switching**

Objective Characteristics	High (+)/ Low (-)	Brand Switching Likely to occur ✓ Unlikely to occur x
1. Number of alternatives	+	✓
	-	x
2. Frequency of purchase	+	✓
	-	x
<b>Perceived Characteristics</b>		
1. Involvement	+	x
	-	✓
2. Risk	+	x
	-	✓
3. Difference between brands	+	x
	-	✓
4. Brand Loyalty	+	x
	-	✓
5. Dependence on sensation	+	✓
	-	x

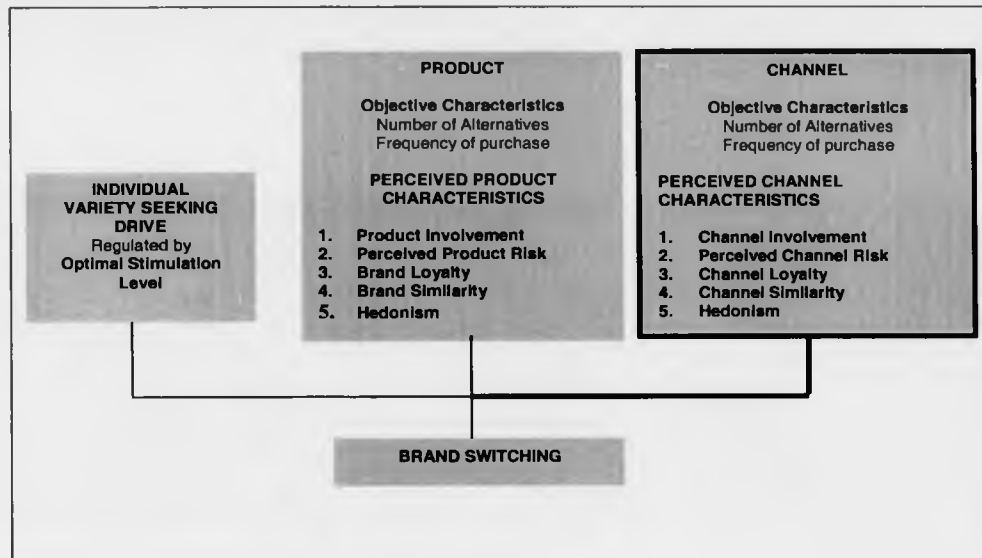
Source: Adapted from Hoyer and Ridgway (1984)

Although Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) never tested their propositions, there has been a single attempt to empirically test this model in the context of separating intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of brand switching (Van Trijp et al 1996). The authors' results support the notion that product characteristics mediate the occurrence of brand switching.

Building on Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) and the empirical findings (Van Trijp et al, 1996) the conceptual framework proposed in this research highlights the role of the channel characteristics in influencing brand switching behaviour (figure 3.1).



**Figure 5.1 The thesis' conceptual framework**



Source: Adapted from Hoyer and Ridgway (1984)

The framework is based on the idea that as channels proliferate, channel characteristics (objective and perceived) as well as product characteristics (objective and perceived) and the consumer's need for variety (optimal stimulation level) will have an influence on brand switching. In other words, brand switching is a function of three factors (optimal stimulation level, product, and channel) and not two as previously theorised. It is important to note that this framework focuses exclusively on the intrinsic motivations of brand switching and therefore excludes the extrinsic factors considered in the Hoyer and Ridgway model (i.e. decision strategies, situational and normative factors, dissatisfaction with current brand and problem solving).

### 5.1 Channel characteristics

The conceptualisation of channel characteristics is based on Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) five product constructs (involvement, perceived risk, differences between brands, brand loyalty, and dependence on sensation) hypothesised to mediate the occurrence of brand switching. In the modified model (figure 5.1) the channel factor is hypothesised to consist of similar variables as the product factor (e.g. channel involvement, channel risk, channel loyalty, difference between channels, and hedonism in channels). These characteristics may be not exhaustive, however due to the fact that there is no literature in conceptualising the channel factor, the concepts that compose the product factor of the Hoyer and Ridgway model represent a good starting point in exploring the notion of channel characteristics. The following section deals with the discussion of channel involvement, channel risk, channel loyalty, channel similarity and hedonism in channels.

#### 5.1.1 Channel involvement

The literature on involvement examines the concept in relation to 1) the product (Zaichkowsky, 1985), 2) a specific product class (Bloch 1981), 3) an advertising message (Mitchell, 1981), 4) the purchase decision (Slama and Tashchian 1985), 5) fashion (Tiger et al, 1983), 6) shopping (Bergadaa et al, 1994), and 7) a brand (Mittal and Lee, 1988).

There is a dearth of literature dealing with the concept of involvement in a retail context. However, there has been an attempt to examine involvement in retail store

positioning (Arora, 1982, 1985). The author linked the concept of involvement with retailing suggesting that highly involved individuals are likely to be concerned about a greater number of retail attributes, than low involved individuals. The author measured involvement by inferring the degree of importance attached to various store attributes to determine any differences among those with different levels of involvement. This attempt seems to be the only indication in the involvement literature that associates involvement with a retail channel. In this case, involvement is used as a moderating variable for assessing retail store perceptions.

#### Defining channel involvement

Currently there is no conceptual evidence about involvement with a channel (e.g. store, catalogue, Internet) and as a result, no conceptual basis for defining channel involvement. In overcoming this limitation a definition of channel involvement is formed using an existing definition of purchase decision involvement borrowed from Mittal (1989). The author defines purchase decision involvement as,

*"The extent of interest and concern that a consumer brings to bear upon a purchase-decision task" (p150).*

Mittal's definition of involvement is analogous to the situational involvement of Houston and Rothschild (1978) and its object of direction is the purchase decision task (e.g. involvement with the purchase decision). The notion of the 'interest and concern' in a purchase decision task concerns 1) the degree of caring about which

brand to buy, 2) the perceived brand differences, 3) the importance of right brand selections and 4) the concern with the outcome.

As highlighted in chapter 4, the choice of channel often precedes the choice of the product or brand. It is therefore evident that the choice of a channel is often a part of the individual's decision making with regard to the purchase of a given product or brand. Based on this, it can be argued that an individual involved with the purchase decision should also be concerned with the choice of the channel. However, in the context of this research, the concern with the channel choice is viewed as a separate notion, where the individual is involved with the decision from which channels to buy. In this context, channel decision involvement may be defined as,

*"The extent of interest and concern that a consumer brings to bear upon a channel-decision task".*

On a conceptual level, channel decision involvement is a situational type of involvement. Situational involvement is most often triggered (or motivated) in purchase decisions with high levels of perceived risk<sup>13</sup> (Richins and Bloch, 1986). In this case, the consumer is not involved with the product per se, but with the purchase of the product. In such instances accompanied behaviours such as extensive information search are motivated to maximise the outcome of the purchase decision. During the purchase decision process consumers are expected to acquire vast amounts of information and be able to evaluate brands in terms of their characteristics. Once the purchase has been completed the involvement subsides.

From a channel perspective, the consumer is situationally involved with the choice of the channel for a number of particular reasons. The possible motivations of channel involvement are unknown since it is a new concept. However, it is possible to draw some hypotheses with regard to its nature by adapting previous theory. Initially, the fact that channel involvement appears to be determined by the situation may imply a relationship with perceived risk. For example, in a purchase situation where a high-risk product is involved the consumer may feel obliged to become involved with the choice of channel in order to maximise the outcome of the purchase. In this case, channel involvement appears to be motivated by perceived risk in products. Alternatively, the consumer may perceive risk with regard to the attributes of a particular channel, for example its security in terms of financial transactions. Subsequently, the consumer may feel equally obliged to become situationally involved with the choice of channel. In this case, channel involvement is triggered by motivations derived solely from channels. In this context, it is hypothesised that channel decision involvement is related to perceived channel risk.

**Hypothesis**

- 1 There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and perceived channel risk

Channel decision involvement appears to derive from product-oriented or channel-oriented motivations. Regardless of the motivations, channel involvement may be accompanied by a set of behaviours including extensive information seeking, evaluation of channel attributes and possibly brand loyalty. In particular, consumers

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<sup>13</sup> Price is most often the source of perceived risk (Rothschild, 1979).

involved with the channel decision are expected to engage in information seeking which will enable them to distinguish among channel attributes. It is therefore hypothesised that channel decision involvement is related to information seeking in channels and channel similarity.

**Hypotheses**

- 2 There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and information in channels
- 3 There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and channel similarity

Further, channel decision involvement may derive from enduring involvement with a channel. Such enduring involvement may represent the consumer's on-going interest with, importance of or self-relevance of a particular channel (e.g. Internet). While channel decision involvement and enduring channel involvement may both represent a state of arousal, they are likely to differ in their inherent motivations<sup>14</sup> and duration. Enduring involvement with the channel may derive from the enjoyment an individual receives from the channel, in terms of window shopping, browsing a catalogue or the Internet. The purchase of a product is not a necessary condition, however, this type of involvement may lead to channel decision involvement. Based on this, it is hypothesised that channel decision involvement may derive from the enjoyment in channels.

**Hypothesis**

- 4 There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and enjoyment in channels

<sup>14</sup> Pleasure or enjoyment derived from channel use may be a source of enduring channel involvement.

### 5.1.2 Perceived channel risk

The notion of the channel risk derives from literature that theorises perceived risk in retail patronage behaviour. Cox and Rich (1964) provided a patronage-oriented perspective to the study of perceived risk. Their study examined perceived risk in telephone shopping and found risk to differentiate between contexts; perceived risk in telephone shopping exceeded the risk perceived in store shopping. They concluded that the amount and type of risk vary across consumers and shopping situations and that perceived risk is likely to be,

*"A fairly universal phenomenon in shopping because the factors necessary to produce risk are present in many shopping situations" (p504).*

Since then, there have been a few studies focusing on perceived risk and retail patronage, often comparing various shopping modes based on the level of perceived risk (table 5.3). The nine studies cited in table 5.3 deal with perceived risk in the choice of patronage mode. Three (e.g. Spence et al, 1970; Hawes and Lumpkin, 1986 and Festervant et al, 1986) compare store versus non-store perceptions of risk, two of which (Spence et al and Festervant et al) are consistent with Cox and Rich (1964). In addition to the three studies, other authors address the patronage aspects of perceived risk, though focusing on store modes. For example, the study of Dash et al (1976) examined perceived risk between two similar patronage modes, speciality stores and department stores, for the purchase of audio equipment. Consumers were classified as

patrons of the two shopping modes and compared across their self-confidence, perception of risk and product importance.

**Table 5.3 Perceived risk studies in retail patronage literature**

Study	Number of patronage modes used	Patronage modes	Product categories used
1. Cox and Rich (1964)	3	a. Telephone b. Department store c. Speciality store	3
2. Spence et al (1970)	3	a. Mail-order b. Retail Store c. Salesman	20
3. Hisrich et al (1972)	1	a. Retail Store	3
4. Prasad (1975)	2	a. Discount stores b. Department stores	24
5. Dash et al (1976)	2	a. Speciality stores b. Department stores	1
6. Vincent and Zikmund (1976)	1	a. Retail Store	1
7. Hawes and Lumpkin (1986)	6	a. Department stores b. Speciality stores c. Discount stores d. Store catalogues e. Other catalogues and direct mail f. Media advertisements	1
8. Festervand et al (1986)	2	a. Direct mail b. Retail stores	12
9. Jasper and Ouellette (1994)	1	a. Catalogue	1

Prasad (1975) provided a classification of 24 products according to two types of risk (economic and social) which then used to compare attitudes towards two types of stores (discount and department stores). Hisrich et al (1972) used carpeting draperies and furniture to examine the relationship between perceived risk and self-confidence and perceived risk and information seeking in store selection.

Vincent and Zikmund (1976) provide a different perspective to the study of perceived risk in patronage behaviour. These authors introduced the idea of situational factors



[for example the purchase of a product for various occasions such as for personal use, as a gift or for public use] and measured four types of risk (performance risk, social risk, physical risk and financial risk) in the purchase of one product (electric knife) from two different stores (stores A and B) for two different occasions (for home use and as a wedding present).

Finally, a more recent study by Jasper and Ouellette (1994) examined the role of perceived risk in the purchase of clothing from catalogues with the purpose of investigating the relationship between perceived risk, frequency of purchasing and amount spent.

#### Defining perceived channel risk

The concept of perceived risk in product choices is based on the idea that consumers perceive a certain amount of risk in their decisions to purchase a product or brand (Stem et al, 1977, see chapter 3, page 68). Perceived risk has been investigated in relation to the choice of retail patronage, where authors highlight the importance of channel in the study of perceived risk. (e.g. Hawes and Lumpkin, 1986). However, the extant literature on channel risk is seriously limited. To date there has been no systematic attempt to compare the amount of perceived risk across multiple channels and investigate its relationship with other variables of consumer choice behaviour (e.g. loyalty, involvement etc.). Only a few studies have attempted to explore the perceived risk aspects of channels. However, it is now more meaningful to examine perceived risk in channels because of the expanding number of alternative shopping

channels, which seem to make the choice of the channel an important part of the consumer purchase decision.

In addition to the lack of knowledge, the fact that perceived channel risk is a complex construct makes its conceptualisation and measurement in the context of the present research, rather difficult. Perceived channel risk is defined as,

*"The amount of risk a consumer perceives in the choice of a shopping channel".*

The relationship between product and channel risk has not been investigated in the literature, although there is an indication that the two may be related (Hisrich et al, 1972.). The authors suggest that dealing with perceived risk in a channel context may be a strategy for handling perceived product risk. In spite of the fact that this hypothesis has been empirically rejected (by Hisrich et al, 1972), it represents a good starting point in exploring the channel risk in consumer choices.

Channel risk appears to be specific to the channel. In other words it derives from the characteristics of the particular channel, and its level and type should vary from channel to channel. For example, for store-based channels a consumer may perceive risk with regard to the refund policy, whereas for a catalogue a consumer's perceived risk may be associated with the delivery of the item, the customer service or the reputation.

With the exception of Festervant et al (1986) who utilised the classification of Jacoby and Kaplan's (1972) five types of risk (see chapter 3, page 70) all other authors adopt an 'overall risk'<sup>15</sup> approach. A single study cannot resolve the doubts as to whether the Jacoby and Kaplan (1972) classification (or any other classification) is pertinent to the study of perceived channel risk. In other words, types of perceived risk developed in a product context (e.g. financial, performance etc.) may not apply in a channel context. It is possible that certain types of risk associated with specific channel formats (e.g. store-based) are obsolete for other channel formats (e.g. catalogues). It is therefore necessary to acknowledge that in a channel context, perceived risk types may be specific to each channel (e.g. Internet, catalogue, retail store).

Further the product category involved in a purchase situation may determine the type of channel risk perceived. For example in purchasing certain products from a catalogue a consumer may perceive risk due to the inability to personally inspect them. This type of risk does not seem to apply when the products are bought from a retail store. It is apparent that the product category influences the types of risk pertinent across channels. It also reinforces the fact that perceived types of risk are specific to channels.

With regard to its relationship with other variables, perceived risk is associated with channel decision involvement as a motivator (discussed in section 5.1.1).

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<sup>15</sup> For example authors ask respondents to rate the amount of risk felt present in particular buying situations (e.g. Spence et al, 1970).

Additionally, it may be related to channel loyalty. The relationship between loyalty and risk received a lot of attention in product choices where brand loyalty has been found to be a common strategy for reducing perceived risk (Bauer, 1960; Sheth and Venkatesan, 1968; Roselius, 1971). Given their relationship in a product context, and in an attempt to explore the nature and nomology of perceived channel risk it is hypothesised that channel risk relates to channel loyalty.

**Hypothesis**

- 5 There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and channel loyalty

A number of other risk-related variables have been explored including information seeking and self-confidence (e.g. Barach, 1969; Locander and Hermann, 1979). Individuals seek information in order to handle the perceived uncertainty in product choices (see chapter 3, page 72). Thus, in situations involving channel choice, it can be hypothesised that information seeking is used in an attempt to minimise the risk.

Individuals' self-confidence is suggested to affect the amount of perceived risk and extent of information seeking in a purchase situation (Barach, 1969; Locander and Hermann, 1979). Given their relationship in perceived product risk, and to explore perceived risk in channels, it is reasonable to hypothesise that a relationship exists among channel risk, information seeking and self-confidence.

#### Hypotheses

- 6 There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and information seeking in channels
- 7 There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and self-confidence in channels
- 8 There is a relationship between self-confidence in channels and information seeking in channels

#### 5.1.3 Channel loyalty

The concept of loyalty is fairly well established in the area of consumer behaviour, although it still generates considerable debate. Loyalty has been extensively examined at a brand level, however less attention has been devoted to examining its role in retail patronage. Specifically, studies of loyalty in retail patronage focus either on store loyalty (Macintosh and Lockshin, 1997; Bloemer and De Ruyter, 1998; Knox and Denison, 2000; Dick and Basu 1994), or catalogue loyalty (McDonald, 1993; Klassen and Glynn, 1992). In order to conceptualise and measure store loyalty, researchers have borrowed concepts from the brand loyalty domain while the conceptualising of catalogue loyalty appears to be at very early stages.

Research suggests that consumers develop loyalty to a brand or store for a number of reasons, including psychological commitment (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978) or simply as a strategy to reduce perceived risk in brand choice (Bauer, 1960; Roselius 1971). It is possible to argue that traditionally, consumers developed loyalties because of the restricted choice of brands and retail channels. It was simply not possible for them to access a great number of brands and shops (Schultz and Bailey, 2000).

At present, the retail picture is different due to the proliferation in shopping channels such as the Internet, digital television and mobile phones. These systems provide the consumer with a greater choice of ways of obtaining products. It is expected that this proliferation will influence various aspects of consumer behaviour such as information seeking and loyalty. Following this proliferation in retail channels, it appears more meaningful to explore the concept of loyalty in channels for particular product categories. In the context of this research, channel loyalty examines the extent to which individuals use one or many channel(s) for the purchase of a product. In other words, their use of a particular channel is likely to indicate loyalty towards that channel. Additionally, individuals are expected to show commitment to a single channel to the extent that the motivations of their choice of the channel are based entirely on channel attributes. For example, in the case where an individual chooses to buy from catalogue because of product attributes such as, quality of products or brands he or she is not committed to catalogue buying. Alternatively, there is commitment if he or she chooses to buy from a catalogue because of convenience (e.g. lack of time to shop from retail stores). Channel loyalty is therefore defined as,

*"The propensity to patronise a particular retail channel for a particular product class over time"*<sup>16</sup>.

It is not clear whether channel loyalty is related to brand loyalty, despite previous research suggesting that brand loyal consumers are likely to be store loyal (Carman, 1970).

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<sup>16</sup> This definition is consistent with Knox and Denison (2000).

However, based on brand loyalty theory it is possible to hypothesise relationships of channel loyalty with other channel characteristics. A relationship may exist between channel loyalty and perceived channel risk [discussed in section 5.1.2]. In choosing shopping channels, the consumer may be uncertain about the consequences of his choice<sup>17</sup>. A possible way to deal with this uncertainty is to patronise the channel he or she is satisfied with<sup>18</sup>. Additionally, channel loyalty may be indirectly related to enduring channel involvement. This may be true to the extent that the two concepts share common underlying principles. For example, both concepts seem to involve some kind of consistency over a period of time and appear to relate to the notion of commitment, which possibly mediates their relationship. Because commitment appears to operate at a brand<sup>19</sup> level, it is unclear how it might relate to channel loyalty. For example, involvement with a channel (e.g. catalogue) may lead to the commitment of the individual with a particular catalogue brand, which ideally would lead to catalogue (channel) loyalty.

Further, channel loyalty may be related to brand switching. This hypothesis is developed on the basis of a theory, which suggests that low levels of channel loyalty may accommodate the variety sought by a consumer in a way that decreases variety-seeking induced brand switching (Menon & Kahn, 1995). In other words individuals may satisfy their need for variety by using multiple channels to buy a particular brand (thus remaining brand loyal) as opposed to switch brands in a given product class.

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<sup>17</sup> With regard to whether he or she will receive good service if required.

<sup>18</sup> In such case it might be catalogue, retail store or the Internet.

#### Hypothesis

- 9 There is a relationship between channel loyalty and brand switching

#### 5.1.4 Channel similarity

The channel factor is hypothesised to include an element of similarity between channels. In a product context, perceived brand differences (or brand similarity) are said to mediate the occurrence of brand switching in that, where a consumer perceives little differentiation among alternatives (substitutes) brand switching is likely to occur. Additionally, brand similarity has been linked to the concept of involvement. A positive relationship is said to exist between channel similarity and purchase decision involvement, in that the higher the level of involvement the more able the consumer is to magnify the similarities (or differences) among the alternative brands (Mittal, 1989). Therefore, brand similarity is considered as a consequence of involvement (Zaichkowsky 1985).

Little attention has been devoted to examining the role of similarity in brand choice behaviour (Muncy, 1990). As a result, its examination in a channel context is extremely difficult. Initially, the examination of similarity among channels and its influence in consumer behaviour was not meaningful in 'traditional' decision making, because of the restricted choice of shopping channels. The retail environment was predominantly composed of store-type channels with the minor possibility of non-store purchase. Given today's variety of shopping channels which includes store and non-store formats, the exploration of similarities (or differences) among channels

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<sup>19</sup> In this case the company name, or store name.



becomes meaningful. Indeed, there is a great variation among the channels in terms of their characteristics, which offer different benefits to the consumer for different product classes. In this context, the notion of channel similarity becomes an important aspect of the channel selection, where the consumer attempts to evaluate the alternative channels based on a number of attributes. Finally, channel similarity appears to relate to other channel characteristics including channel decision involvement and perceived channel risk. (These hypotheses have already been presented in the previous discussion of channel decision involvement, perceived channel risk). In addition, where a consumer is highly involved with the channel decision he or she is hypothesised to seek information with regard to the different channels and evaluate their characteristics.

**Hypothesis**

- 10 There is a relationship between channel similarity and information seeking in channels

#### 5.1.5 Hedonism in channels

The 'hedonic' aspect relates to the concept of hedonic consumption in product choices developed by Hirschman and Holbrook (1982). The objective is to build a picture that links the hedonic aspect with the channel notion.

In a product context, the term 'hedonic' refers to the emotive aspects of a person's experience with a product (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). If looked at in a channel context, it may concern the emotional appeal of the channel, for example its ability to provide pleasure, fun or enjoyment.

This view seems to be related to the Kapferer and Laurent (1985b) conceptualisation of the hedonic value of involvement. The authors suggest that the hedonic (pleasure) value of the product is a facet (or antecedent) of involvement. Pleasure value can potentially trigger involvement, which is characterised as a motivational or arousal state (Kapferer and Laurent, 1985b). The authors suggest that pleasure value is mainly a source of the enduring type of involvement, as opposed to the situational one. Despite the controversy about the dimensionality of involvement, the predominant view of those that support multi-dimensionality is that the notion of pleasure appears to be a factor of involvement (Jain and Srinivasan, 1990). Relating to the channel context, the hedonic aspect is viewed as,

*"The enjoyment or pleasure a consumer derives from the use of a channel for the purchase of a particular product class".*

Based on previous literature, the enjoyment or pleasure is likely to trigger a continuous (or enduring) type of involvement with a particular channel which possibly entails (or triggers) channel decision involvement. Following this, it is hypothesised that the enjoyment or pleasure is related to channel decision involvement. The hypothesis which emerges from the conceptualisation of the enjoyment in channels [with regard to its interaction with other channel characteristics] has been outlined in a previous section (see section 5.1.1-hypothesis 4).

The following section (section 5.2) summarises the hypotheses developed to explore the interaction among channel characteristics and the relationship with brand switching. It is imperative to emphasise that the hypotheses developed in the context of this research focus exclusively on the channel characteristics, in an attempt to investigate their nature and interaction with brand switching. The development of hypotheses addressing the relationship of individual and product characteristics (discussed in chapter 2 and 3) with brand switching go beyond the scope of this research, given existing literature which explores [conceptually and empirically] those relationships (e.g. Raju, 1980; Hoyer and Ridgway, 1984; Wahlers et al, 1986; Van Trijp, et al, 1996).

A number of concepts were used to facilitate the development of the hypotheses, including channel commitment and enduring channel involvement. While it is acknowledged that these concepts are important in understanding certain channel characteristics (e.g. channel decision involvement, channel loyalty) their nature and interaction [with other channel characteristics] is not explored in the context of this research. In terms of 'channel commitment', it is considered that commitment to a channel operates at a 'retailer' level<sup>20</sup> as opposed to the channel 'format' (e.g. retail store, catalogue, Internet) on which the conceptual framework is purported to apply. Similarly, 'enduring channel involvement' is not explored given the non-existent conceptual basis to link the notion of enduring involvement with that of the channel<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> By 'retailer' level we mean specific 1) stores (e.g. Next, Marks and Spencer etc.), 2) catalogues (e.g. Empire, Freemans etc.), 3) Internet sites (e.g. [www.warehousefashions.com](http://www.warehousefashions.com) etc.).

<sup>21</sup> As opposed to the concept of channel decision involvement where a conceptual basis has been identified in the literature, that of purchase decision involvement (Mittal, 1989).

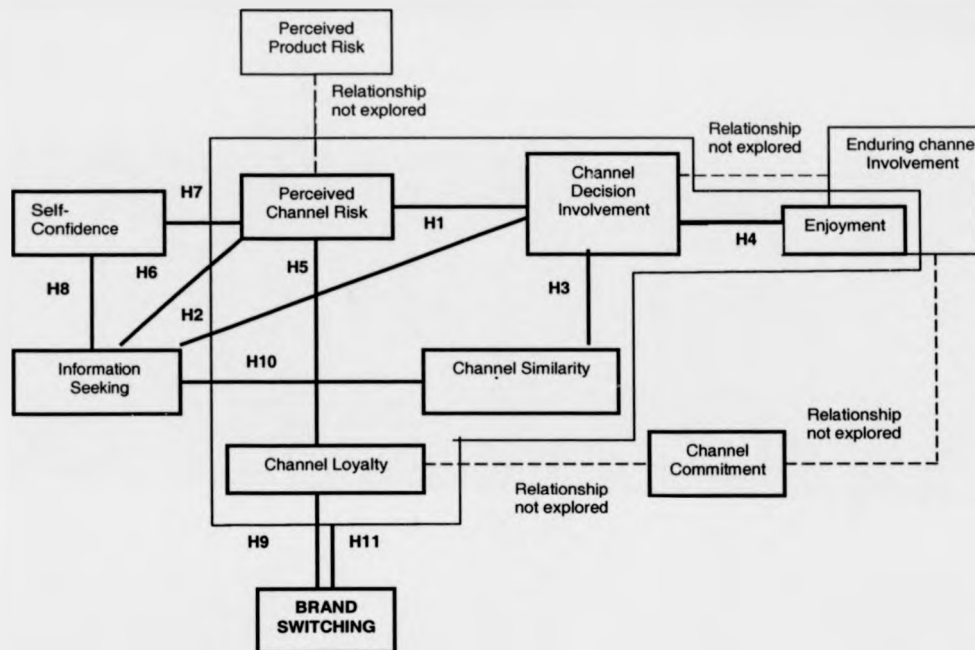
In addition, the complexity and confusion which characterises the involvement literature undermines the attempt to adapt existing theory in a channel context.

## 5.2 Summary of the chapter

The channel characteristics compose the channel factor hypothesised to influence brand switching behaviour. To understand the nature of and interaction among channel characteristics a set of eleven hypotheses has been developed. The following figure (5.2) illustrates the hypothesised relationships among the channel characteristics, which are also summarised in table 5.4.

The notion of the channel as discussed in chapter 4, highlights the need for additional research in the area of consumer choice behaviour. In the context of this research channel characteristics are hypothesised to influence brand switching behaviour (Hypothesis 11). The channel characteristics represent the third factor highlighted by the conceptual framework (figure 5.1) to influence brand switching behaviour. The general hypothesis guiding this research is that brand switching behaviour is a function of individual, product and channel characteristics. Individual and product characteristics have been previously considered as potential influences of brand switching behaviour (Hoyer and Ridgway, 1984), and extensively discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

**Figure 5.2 Hypothesised relationships among channel characteristics**



**Table 5.4 Summary of hypothesised relationships among the channel characteristics**

H1	There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and perceived channel risk
H2	There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and information seeking in channels
H3	There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and channel similarity
H4	There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and enjoyment in channels
H5	There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and channel loyalty
H6	There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and information seeking in channels
H7	There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and self-confidence in channels
H8	There is a relationship between self-confidence in channels and information seeking in channels
H9	There is a relationship between channel loyalty and brand switching
H10	There is a relationship between channel similarity and information seeking in channels
H11	There is a relationship between channel characteristics and brand switching

## **6.0 METHODOLOGY**

The focus of this chapter is the operationalisation of the conceptual framework. A questionnaire has been developed purported to measure the elements involved in the framework. The questionnaire is administered online, in the context of shopping for clothes.

The chapter begins with the research instrument, its structure and method of administration. Subsequently, it focuses on the product category chosen for the present research, and the operationalisations of individual (optimal stimulation level), product and channel characteristics. The chapter ends with the operationalisation of brand switching.

### **6.1 The research instrument**

The choice of the research instrument depends on the type of the information sought (Churchill, 1999). The present research seeks indicators of the individual's psychological and lifestyle characteristics, attitudes and opinions and behaviour in a consumer context. As such, the versatility of the questionnaire (its ability to capture the various types of primary data) makes it attractive. The questionnaire benefits from speed and cost advantages over other data-collection methods (e.g. observations and case studies). In addition, it offers greater control over the gathering of the data and is consistent with the literature in this area of inquiry (e.g. Chaudhuri, 1998; Knox et al, 1994; Beharrell and Denison, 1995; Edgett and Cullen, 1993 etc.).

A number of decisions need to be made with regard to the questionnaire's structure and method of administration. In addition, the issues of validity and reliability [of measures] are fundamental in pursuing scientific research and must be considered. Given their importance, the questionnaire is highly structured with standardised responses.

#### 6.1.1 Structure of the questionnaire

Fixed-alternative response structures were selected based on the fact that they provide greater control and increase reliability. Reliability relates to "*the degree to which measures are free from error and therefore yield consistent results*" (Peter, 1979, p6). In addition, the questions carry a predetermined set of replies, which reveal the frame of reference and ensure clarity. This is particularly important for questions relating to behaviour involving dimensions of "How", "Where", "How much" or "When". However, the use of a predetermined set of replies may force a response to a question, which does not accurately reflect the respondent's behaviour (attitude or opinion or interest etc.) jeopardising the validity of the measure. Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it is purported to measure (Peter, 1979). As such, an instrument is said to be valid,

*"To the extent that differences in scores among objects reflect the objects' true differences on the characteristic that the instrument tries to measure"* (Churchill 1999, p453).

Due to the fact that true scores are unknown, validity of a given measure is always inferred by looking at its construct, content (or face) and predictive (or criterion) validity (table 6.1).

**Table 6.1 Types of validity of measures**

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Content validity:</b> refers to the assessment of the representativeness or the sampling adequacy of the items contained in the measuring instrument.</li><li>• <b>Predictive validity:</b> refers to the assessment of the extent to which the obtained score may be used to estimate an individual's future standing with respect to the criterion variable.</li><li>• <b>Construct validity:</b> refers to the understanding of the factors that underlie the obtained measurement.</li></ul> |
|---|

Source: Tull and Hawkins (1993)

Among these, construct validity is the most important and difficult to establish (Churchill, 1999). Construct validity deals with the question of what the instrument is in fact measuring. In essence it denotes that a measure assesses the magnitude and direction of the construct it suppose to assess in terms of, 1) all of the characteristics of the construct and 2) only the characteristics of the construct (Peter, 1981).

Peter and Churchill (1986) state that the degree of construct validity is in fact an inference (or judgement) which is based on certain evidence. Three 'indicators' are often used to establish construct validity, including content validity, trait validity (reliability, convergence and discriminant validity) and lastly nomological validity.

In the context of the research, to increase the validity of measures the category of "other" has been added to the set of replies for those respondents whose opinion is



not reflected by the standardised responses. However, because of the possible reluctance of the respondents to respond in this category (Churchill, 1999), every attempt has been made to cover the range of possible alternative responses.

Further, it was considered important to communicate the purpose of the research to the respondents for reasons of clarity. Due to the fact that the questionnaire attempts to measure complex concepts and ideas it is important to minimise difficulty and confusion on the part of the respondents in completing the questionnaire. A brief paragraph explaining the purpose of the research was included as well as some 'notes for completion', which clarify the meanings of various terms used within the context of the questionnaire.

#### 6.1.2 Method of administration

In deciding how the data will be collected, the various approaches were analysed in terms of their advantages and disadvantages prior to making an informed choice. The two crucial issues, which guided the evaluation of the various alternatives, were sampling control and cost.

Firstly, because the subject of inquiry involves the comparison of three channels (retail store, catalogue, Internet) in a shopping context, it was considered imperative that the population from which the sample was to be drawn had some experience with all channels. If this was to be ensured, the sampling frame needed to come from a database or a mailing list. Because of the uncertainty that surrounds the quality of

mailing lists, which may introduce sampling bias, it was considered advantageous that a company's customer database should serve as the sampling frame. As such, the method chosen for the collection of the data would be partly dependent on the information disclosed by the company (e.g. telephone numbers, mailing addresses etc.). However, access to a database is a difficult thing to achieve in the UK because of the Data Protection Act, as such the ideal situation would be for the company to direct the questionnaire to the designated respondents drawn from its customer population.

Secondly, the issues of cost and handling are raised for the selection of the preferable data-collection method. In general, the cheapest method in terms of per-contact cost is considered to be the mail (Churchill, 1999) because it does not involve any field staff unlike telephone and personal interviews. However, mailing involves physical effort associated with collating the questionnaires, stuffing and addressing envelopes, which may be time-consuming, costly and inconvenient [depending on the sample size] and may discourage companies. To avoid such problems, the use of e-mail as an alternative to mail seems particularly attractive. Although the use of e-mail for collecting data is not very popular among researchers, there is a general agreement as to its wide-ranging advantages. Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1995) state that,

*"The introduction of electronic media such as facsimile machines, video text, cable TV and electronic mail hold promise as alternatives to more traditional survey methods"* (p168).

A few researchers have considered examining the effectiveness of e-mail as a medium for collecting data including Dibb et al (2001) that propose various advantages and disadvantages of e-mail versus mail survey mediums (table 6.2).

**Table 6.2 Advantages and disadvantages of the E-mail survey medium**

<p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low transmission and collection costs (Particularly for international data collection).</li> <li>• Convenience of Handling. (Do not involve physical effort such as collating, stuffing and addressing envelopes; e-mail files can be saved into the out-going mailbox and sent on to a large number of addresses simply by entering the respondents addresses).</li> <li>• Immediate notification of incorrect address.</li> <li>• Responses are returned with notification of date and time.</li> <li>• Respondent queries with completing the questionnaire can be handled quickly.</li> <li>• E-mail respondents tend to be less inhibited in their answers (Writing more for open-ended questions).</li> <li>• Transmission is very fast (Instant).</li> <li>• Sample control (Securing a response from the intended respondent).</li> <li>• E-mail questionnaires are currently relatively unusual and may therefore arouse interest and attention.</li> <li>• More urgency may be attached to an e-mail message and it is less likely to be perceived as junk mail than a mailed questionnaire.</li> <li>• E-mails are perceived as an environmentally friendly means of communication.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In many circumstances, sample coverage is low (Distribution limited to those that have access to a computer and e-mail accounts. Also, those targeted need to be sufficiently confident to use this medium).</li> <li>• Sample bias may arise from the low sample coverage (Those most likely to answer an e-mail survey are likely to be well educated, upper/middle income individuals interested in technology).</li> <li>• The quality and appearance of an e-mail questionnaire may not be as good as a mailed questionnaire.</li> <li>• It is more difficult to include tangible incentives (This may cause response rates to fall).</li> <li>• Not everyone checks e-mail on a daily basis (Average response speed may be underestimated).</li> <li>• Respondents that receive large quantities of e-mail may respond negatively and discard the e-mail as junk mail.</li> <li>• Some respondents may find e-mail questionnaires more difficult to respond to than mailed ones.</li> <li>• E-mail does not ensure anonymity affect the willingness to respond.</li> </ul>

Source: Dibb et al (2001)

In evaluating the advantages and disadvantages it is concluded that within the particular context of the research the use of e-mail as a data collection method is preferential. The cost benefits, convenience and speed of response outweigh the compromise over the sample coverage. Although, in general, the use of e-mail limits the distribution to those individuals with access to computers and e-mail accounts, in the context of this research this is not a disadvantage since their profiles match the sample requirements. Further, because the e-mail may affect the quality and appearance of the questionnaire in a negative sense, jeopardising the quality of the data, it was considered important to combine the use of e-mail with hypermedia (www). By combining the two, one benefits from the e-mails' low cost and fast response while ensuring greater control over the questionnaire's appearance and layout through the use of the www (Dibb et al, 2001).

#### 6.1.3 Questionnaire format

The questionnaire is designed around six themes (sections) which intend to address questions with regard to the constructs in the conceptual framework (e.g. involvement, loyalty, perceived risk etc.) as well as demographics and general purchase behaviour. The final format of the questionnaire derives from a series of evaluations involving five previous versions and two pilot testings, conducted for different purposes,<sup>22</sup> before and after the final version was hosted on the Warwick Business School web-site. The questionnaire consists of ninety-nine items (derived from previous literature) using a combination of nominal and ordinal scales for a

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<sup>22</sup> See chapter 7 for a discussion on questionnaire testing.

variety of response formats including Likert-type, rating, dichotomous and multichotomous, in an attempt to maintain the respondents' interest throughout its completion. Likert scales are primarily used for assessing attitudes and are considered reliable and effective in producing meaningful results (Slama and Tashchian, 1983).

#### 6.2 Choice of product to be studied

The present research deals with a single product category. Various concepts relating to the framework (e.g. involvement, perceived risk etc.) have been individually tested utilising measures which tap individual differences across many product categories (e.g. Zaichkowski, 1985). However, this research supports the thinking that a single product category should be selected. This is because such concepts are specific to product categories and appear to be more relevant and meaningful when a single product category is used (Bloch, 1981; Hawes and Lumpkin, 1986).

Consequently, in the context of this research, the selection of the product category is primarily dependent on the research inquiry. The conceptual framework theorises that product and channel characteristics (objective and perceived) appear to influence brand switching. Of particular importance are the objective characteristics, which somehow guide the selection of the product category. In both product and channel contexts they refer to the number of available alternatives and inter-purchase frequency. Initially, in a product category where the number of alternatives is relatively minimal, brand switching is said to be rather difficult (e.g. canned vegetables). The same is true where the inter-purchase frequency is rather lengthy

(e.g. home appliances). In selecting the product category, if these two objective characteristics are thought of as continuums (e.g. high-low) on which products are positioned, the ideal product category should be one that is placed somewhere in the middle. This is also relevant in a channel context. To be able to indicate the role of the channel in determining brand switching, the number of available channels via which the selected product category is traded and the frequency of using these channels should be meaningful.

In the context of this research three shopping channels are used including retail store, catalogue and the Internet. As such, it is imperative that the selected product category is relevant (e.g. saleable) through all three channels. With the introduction of new technology, many companies have started to complement their traditional store formats with print and on-line catalogue operations (Mathwick et al, 2001). There are many examples of such companies in the United Kingdom, particularly in the clothing sector. Companies like Next PLC have traditionally dealt with retail store and catalogue operations, however lately they extended to the Internet and digital television.

Unlike other products that could be selected (e.g. books, music etc.), clothing has traditionally been the most popular product category to be purchased by catalogue (Shim and Drake, 1990a). Consequently, most of the previous literature on non-store patronage [including catalogue and electronic modes] utilises clothing (e.g. Smallwood and Wiener, 1987; Shim and Drake, 1990a; Shim and Drake, 1990b;

Jasper and Lan, 1992; McDonald, 1993; Eastlick and Feingberg, 1994; Jasper and Ouellette, 1994; Eastlick and Liu, 1997; Mathwick et al, 2001). Clothing is a product category which is very popular in Internet shopping (Elliot and Fowell, 2000) and which has recently witnessed extensive growth (McQuity and Peterson, 2000).

Further, clothing appears to be linked with concepts such as involvement and perceived risk, which are key elements of the conceptual framework. Compared to other product categories, clothing is said to trigger involvement because it is characterised by functions other than mere performance (O'Cass, 2000). It conveys meanings about,

*"How important an individual is, tells others how much status an individual has, what the individual is like (e.g. professional, sexy, casual). As such, how involved consumers become in their clothes provides a deeper understanding of the dynamics of consumer behaviour and the nature and role of the product category of fashion clothing in society"* (O'Cass 2000, p545).

Indeed, clothing has been examined in relation to involvement and perceived risk in a number of studies (e.g. Tiger et al, 1976; Hawes and Lumpkin 1986; Fairhurst et al, 1989; Flynn and Goldsmith; Browne and Kaldenberg, 1997; Goldsmith and Emmert, 1991; O'Cass, 2000).

The discussion of the research instrument and the product chosen to be studied leads to the subsequent sections focusing on the operationalisation of the various elements

within the conceptual framework (e.g. optimal stimulation level, product and channel characteristics) and the number of problems encountered in their measurement.

### 6.3 Issues in measuring optimal stimulation level

The notion of optimal stimulation level (OSL) relates to the individual's response to environmental stimuli. OSL has been found to determine the extent of individuals' exploratory tendencies in a consumer context (Raju, 1980; Raju, 1983; Wahler et al, 1986; Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1992). In particular, Raju (1980) found a positive relationship between the OSL and various exploratory tendencies such as brand switching, information seeking, adoption of new products and risk behaviour.

In measuring OSL consumer researchers mainly consider a number of scaling procedures originating from the psychology literature, which utilise verbal instruments. Two of the most popular measures among authors are, the Arousal Seeking Tendency (AST) of Mehrabian and Russel (1974) (e.g. Raju 1980 and 1983; Goodwin, 1980; Price and Ridgway 1982; Etzel and Wahlers, 1984; Joachimsthaler and Lastovicka, 1984) and the Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS) of Zuckerman et al (1964) (e.g. Grossbart et al, 1976; Mittelstaedt et al 1976). Some other authors have used the Change Seeker Index (CSI) of Garlington and Shimota, (1964) (e.g. Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1995) or a combination of the instruments available (Wahler et al, 1986; Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1992).



Further, the original scales have been modified, although the AST was traditionally the most preferred because of certain advantages over the other scales. Compared to the other scales the AST is the most recent and concise in the sense that it contains fewer items, which makes it easier to administer (Raju 1980). The scale includes items that correspond to five sources of arousal (change, unusual stimuli, risk, sensuality and new environments) which are likely to be present in a purchase situation (Raju, 1980). Although the authors do not specify which items correspond to each source, the fact that the items capture five sources of arousal may indicate that arousal is adequately captured (face validity).

Reliability estimates of the AST are rarely reported in the literature. Peter (1979) states that researchers rarely assess the reliability of their measures and that as a result there is a lack of evidence of the accuracy and stability of the measures over time. Nevertheless, Raju (1980) suggests that,

*"The arousal seeking tendency scale has been demonstrated to have high reliability and validity. The Kuder-Richardson reliability was found to be 0.87 and the test-retest reliability was 0.88, with a period of four to seven weeks between test and retest. The validity of the scale has been established by correlating it with other constructs, such as anxiety and extroversion" (p275).*

In addition, there are reports of internal consistency, and high convergent validity when the AST was correlated with another measure of OSL (Wahlers et al, 1986; and Wahlers and Etzel, 1990). Internal consistency may be an indicator of construct

validity in which case reinforcing the initial evidence reported by Mehrabian and Russel (1974). The scale has been generated after a vast literature search, where 312 items were initially generated (Bearden et al, 1993). A rigorous procedure (five studies) was used to derive the 40 items, which constitute the scale. This indicates that the measure has undergone extensive development and scrutiny, which is a good indicator of validity (Peter and Churchill, 1986).

As such, the AST appears to be appropriate for measuring optimal stimulation levels in the context of the present research. The original form is preferred to a more recent modification because in most instances scale modifications are specific to research situations, which makes them inapplicable to other research contexts.

#### 6.3.1 Operationalising optimal stimulation level

To measure optimal stimulation level (OSL) the arousal seeking tendency scale (AST) is used, however some modifications have been made to ensure the scale's fitness. The modifications include word replacement, rephrasing and item reversing. In addition, concerns about the length of the scale restricted the number of items that could be included. Items that seemed to overlap were eliminated and of the 40 items in the original instrument (see appendix 1, page 300), only 26 were kept. Another 3 items have been added which originate from Raju's (1980) 'exploratory tendencies in consumer behaviour scale'. These items indicate exploratory tendency through shopping behaviour and are used to bring the character of the scale closer to the context of the present research. Table 6.3 illustrates the synthesis of the OSL scale.

**Table 6.3 The optimal stimulation level scale**

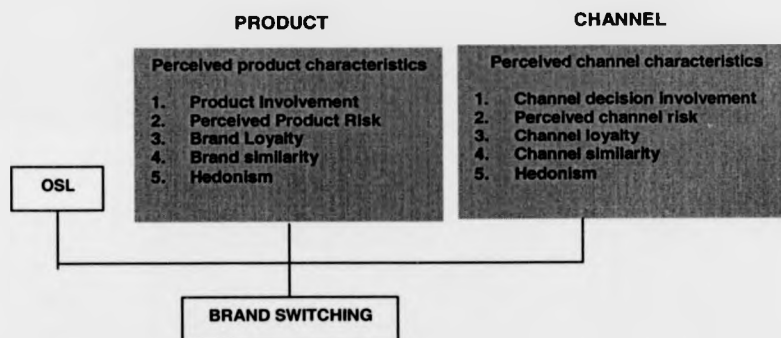
1. I actively seek new ideas and experiences
2. People wearing strange or weird clothing make me feel uncomfortable
3. I prefer familiar people and places
4. I am not interested in poetry
5. When things get boring, I look for new and unfamiliar experiences
6. I like to touch and feel a sculpture
7. People view me as quite an unpredictable person
8. I do not like to run through heaps of fallen leaves
9. I sometimes like to do things that are little frightening
10. I like to shop around (Raju, 1980)
11. I prefer friends who are reliable and predictable
12. I prefer an unpredictable life full of change to a more routine one
13. I don't like surprises
14. My ideal home would be peaceful and quiet
15. I eat the same kind of food most of the time
16. As a child, I often imagine exploring the world
17. I hate window shopping (Raju, 1980)
18. I like novelty and change in my daily routine
19. I am happiest when I feel safe and secure
20. I do not pay much attention to my surroundings
21. I like to go somewhere different nearly everyday
22. I do not like to have lots of activity around me
23. I am interested only in what I need to know
24. I like meeting people who give me new ideas
25. I would be content to live in the same house the rest of my life
26. I have no interest in fashion (Raju, 1980)
27. I like a job that offers variety and travel even if it involves some danger
28. I avoid busy, noisy places
29. I would not enjoy risky sports such as mountain climbing or sky diving

Source: Adapted from Mehrabian and Russel (1984), Raju (1980)

#### 6.4 Operationalising perceived product and channel characteristics

The sections that follow discuss the operationalisation of the variables that compose the product and channel factor of the conceptual framework (figure 6.1). The literature on product characteristics represents the basis on which channel characteristics are conceptualised and measured. For this reason they are discussed together.

**Figure 6.1 The product and channel characteristics of the conceptual framework**



Source: Adapted from Hoyer and Ridgway (1984)

##### 6.4.1 Issues in measuring involvement

Most of the research on involvement, with the exception of Zaichowsky (1985)<sup>23</sup> and Traylor and Joseph (1984), conceptualises and treats involvement as a multi-dimensional construct. The question of whether involvement consists of more than one dimension is very important when attempting to measure it, considering the

<sup>23</sup> Although Zaichowsky's (1985) scale treats involvement as a uni-dimensional construct, she reports that involvement might not be a single construct after all (Zaichowsky, 1987).

diversity which exists in the empirical treatments of involvement ranging from one dimension (Zaichkowsky, 1985; Traylor and Joseph, 1984) to six (Bloch, 1981). However, the predominating view on this matter seems to be that involvement is a multi-dimensional variable. Specifically, Rothschild (1979) states that,

*"No single construct can individually [and] satisfactorily describe, explain or predict involvement" (p78).*

Similarly, Kapferer and Laurent (1985c) suggest that marketing researchers should,

*"stop thinking in terms of single indicators of the involvement level and instead use an 'involvement profile' to specify more fully the nature of the relationship between consumer and a product category" (p41).*

An extensive review of the literature on involvement reveals the confusion, which exists in measuring this construct. It is apparent that involvement means different things to different researchers.

Another issue that dominates the debate on the operationalisation of involvement concerns the development of a generalised measure. Some authors are fond of the view that a single measure could capture all types of involvement across many product categories (e.g. Zaichkowsky, 1985).

Other researchers argue that different measures should be developed for different types of involvement and specific product categories (e.g. Mitchell, 1979; Ray, 1979; Bloch, 1981; Shimp and Sharma, 1983; Antill, 1984; Richins and Bloch, 1986;). In particular, Shimp and Sharma, (1983) state that,

*"A product-specific rather than a generalised involvement scale is justified on theoretical grounds that involvement is inherently specific to a given situation or object" (p58).*

**Table 6.4 Studies of involvement**

Empirical Studies	Type of Involvement studied	Number of factors identified
Tiger et al (1976)	Fashion involvement	5
Lastovicka and Gardner (1979)	Product involvement	3
Tyebjee (1979)	Product involvement Task involvement	3
Bloch (1981)	Product class involvement	6
Shimp and Sharma (1983)	Based on Bloch (1981)	2
Traylor and Joseph (1984)	Product involvement	1
Zalchowsky (1985)	Product involvement (PII)	1
Kapler and Laurent (1985a)	Product involvement (IP)	5
Slama and Tashchian (1985)	Purchase involvement	1
McQuarrie and Munson (1986)	Involvement (based on PII)	3
Bloch et al (1986)	Enduring involvement	3
Ratchford (1987)	Involvement	1
Venkatraman (1988)	Enduring involvement Instrumental involvement	2
Celsi and Olson (1988)	Felt involvement	2
Higle and Feick (1988/9)	Enduring involvement	2
Mittal (1989)	Purchase decision involvement	4
Mittal and Lee (1989)	Product involvement Brand decision involvement	6 (3 each)
Jensen et al (1989)	Involvement (based on Lastovicka and Gardner 1979)	4
Jain and Srinivasan (1990)	Involvement (based on PII and IP)	5
Venkatraman (1990)	Enduring involvement	1
McQuarrie and Munson (1991)	Involvement (based on RPII)	2
Goldsmith et al (1991)	Product involvement Brand decision involvement	6
Edgett and Cullen (1993)	Choice involvement	2
Knox et al (1994)	Enduring involvement Situational involvement (based on Mittal and Lee, 1989)	7
Beharrel and Denison (1995)	Purchase involvement ( based on Mittal 1989)	7
Broderick et al (1995)	Involvement	4
Van Trijp et al (1996)	Product involvement	3

In addition, the level of involvement has been shown to influence the extensiveness of the consumers' cognitive and behavioural processes in a choice behaviour (Dholakia, 1997; Kapferer and Laurent 1985a, 1985b, 1985c). As such, since the level of involvement differs across individuals and products (Bloch, 1981) it might be naïve to think that a single instrument of involvement can capture the differences across individuals, products and situations.

#### 6.4.1.1 Operationalising involvement with clothes

The position taken here is that involvement is a multi-dimensional variable and that instruments measuring involvement should be product category specific. However, since it is not the purpose of the present research to develop a product category specific measure of involvement, a number of items derived from previous scales have been employed to synthesise a scale of fifteen Likert-type items measured on a 5-point scale of 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The choice of Likert-type items is consistent with most of the past literature, which conceptualises involvement as a multi-dimensional variable<sup>24</sup> (Slama and Tashchian, 1983).

Thirty-two items are derived from the extensive review of the involvement literature. The initial items originate from Lastovicka and Gardner (1979), Traylor and Joseph (1984), Kapferer and Laurent (1985a, 1985b and Rodgers and Schneider 1993<sup>25</sup>), Bloch et al (1986), Higie and Feick (1989), Jain and Srinivasan (1990) and Van Trijp

<sup>24</sup> In contrast, Zaichowsky's (1985) Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) which utilises semantic differentials appears to be problematic. McQuarrie and Munson (1986 and 1992) state that the PII suffers from, 1) absence of a multi-dimensional approach, 2) uncertain discriminant validity (danger of attitudinal contamination because some items seem to measure attitudes than involvement), 3) some of the words used for semantic differentials are quite difficult, and 4) some items appear to be redundant.

et al (1996) correspond to five dimensions of involvement [importance (10), interest (6), sign value/symbolic (6), self-expression (2) and hedonic/pleasure aspect (8)]. Note that items corresponding to perceived risk have not been included even though perceived risk has been considered as a dimension of involvement by past research. The decision to exclude perceived risk is based on the fact that although Kapferer and Laurent (1985c) conceptualised perceived risk as a facet of involvement they later report that,

*"Involvement cannot simply be equated with perceived risk"*  
(p45).

Similarly, McQuarrie and Munson (1992) state that,

*"The Laurent and Kapferer measure has its own problems, chief among which is whether risk is properly conceptualised as a dimension of involvement or as a separate construct"*  
(p109).

In addition, the conceptual model highlights perceived risk as an individual concept and therefore it is measured separately.

Due to questionnaire length restrictions a thorough re-examination of the involvement items was followed to eliminate those that seemed to overlap (measured the same dimensions). Fifteen items remained, some of which were modified or reversed to fit

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<sup>25</sup> Roger and Schneider's (1993) translation of the Kapferer and Laurent consumer involvement profile.



in the context of the research. The involvement scale consists of fifteen items corresponding to five dimensions (table 6.5).

**Table 6.5 Items measuring dimensions of involvement**

Item	Source	Dimension
1. It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes	Kapferer and Laurent (1985b)	Hedonic
2. I can think of instances where a personal experience was affected by the way I was dressed.	Lastovicka and Gardner (1979)	Importance
3. Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me.	Lastovicka and Gardner (1979)	Importance
4. I enjoy buying clothes for my self.	Roger and Schneider (1993) of the Kapferer and Laurent scale	Hedonic
5. I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me.	Lastovicka and Gardner (1979)	Importance
6. Clothes help me express who I am.	Higie and Feick (1988)	Self expression
7. I attach great importance to the way people are dressed	Lastovicka and Gardner (1979)	Importance
8. It is true that clothing interests me a lot.	Kapferer and Laurent (1985b)	Interest
9. The kind of clothes I buy do not reflect the kind of person I am.	Roger and Schneider (1993) of the Kapferer and Laurent scale	Sign value
10. I buy clothes for the pleasure they give me not others.	Roger and Schneider (1993) of the Kapferer and Laurent scale	Hedonic
11. Clothing is a topic about which I am indifferent.	Kapferer and Laurent (1985a)	Interest
12. Clothing is not part of my self-image.	Higie and Feick (1988)	Self expression
13. Relative to other products, clothing is the most important to me.	Van Trijp et al (1996)	Importance
14. Buying clothes feels like giving myself a gift.	Kapferer and Laurent (1985b)	Hedonic
15. I am not at all interested in clothes.	Van Trijp et al (1996)	Interest

All scales from which the above items were drawn support the multi-dimensionality of involvement. With the exception of Higie and Feick (1988), the rest of the scales are Likert-type. Although Higie and Feick used semantic differentials based on Zaichkowsky (1985) and McQuarrie and Munson (1986), this is the only source that offers a measure of the self-expression factor. As such it was considered imperative for purposes of face validity to include items measuring this dimension.

Lastovicka and Gardner, (1979) and Kapferer and Laurent (1985a, 1985b and Roger and Schneider 1993) are the main sources of items. Lastovicka and Gardner (1979) is one of the earliest multi-item scales, and has been used conceptually or empirically (item usage) by subsequent research on involvement scales (e.g. Jensen et al, 1989).

Although, reliability estimates and validity tests are not offered, it was suggested that the scale possessed adequate levels of convergent and discriminant validity (Bearden et al, 1993). The scale was developed based on the foundations of involvement as derived from social psychology. It is a traditional operationalisation of involvement using the notion of importance, which increases face validity, in that it bases its conceptualisation of involvement from the 'direct' source. Four items measuring the dimension of importance are drawn from Lastovicka and Gardner (1979).

In addition, six items are drawn from Kapferer and Laurent (and Rogers and Schneider, 1993) measuring three dimensions. The scale developed by the authors is based on an extensive literature review, screening and on-going re-evaluation of the items. Their work has found significant acceptance among researchers, many of which have utilised the scale for subsequent research (e.g. Mittal and Lee, 1988; Mittal and Lee, 1989; Jain and Srinivasan, 1990; Rodgers and Schneider, 1993). Throughout their extensive publications in high-ranking journals the authors report discriminant and predictive validity of the measures enhancing the evidence of construct validity. Various authors have tested the Kapferer and Laurent scales and reported acceptable levels of convergent and discriminant validity (e.g. Celuch and Evans, 1989; Goldsmith and Emmert, 1991).

The remaining items are drawn from Van Trijp et al (1996). These items are taken from an original set of fourteen items derived from the involvement literature. A combination of three items measuring involvement emerges from the analysis. Two

of these items, which correspond to the interest and importance aspects of involvement, are utilised for the present research. To accommodate for the predictive validity of involvement additional items have been derived to measure possible consequences of involvement (table 6.6). The items, which capture brand commitment, knowledge and extensiveness of information search, are taken from Jensen et al (1989)<sup>26</sup>. Although the authors view brand commitment and knowledge as dimensions of involvement, there is substantial conceptual evidence which identifies such behaviours as consequences of involvement (e.g. Zaichkowsky, 1985; McQuarrie and Munson, 1986).

**Table 6.6 Items measuring consequences of involvement**

1. Given the choice I will always differentiate among brands of clothes.	Commitment
2. When evaluating clothing I consider a wide range of features.	Extensiveness of information search
3. I understand the features well enough to evaluate the brands of clothes.	Knowledge

Source: Jensen et al (1989)

#### 6.4.1.2 Operationalising channel decision involvement

Channel decision involvement deals with involvement in a purchase context relating to channel choice. Although there is research in the area of product-choice involvement (e.g. Slama and Tashchian, 1985; Mittal, 1989) academic work on channel choice involvement is non-existent. This limits the understanding of both the nature and nomology of channel involvement, so its operationalisation is extremely difficult. To overcome this difficulty, involvement is initially considered as a

<sup>26</sup> The items have been modified.

hypothetical concept that cannot be measured directly (Kapferer and Laurent, 1985a). In addition, the fact that channel decision involvement is a situational type of involvement means that it is dependent on purchase situations and thus difficult to capture.

As already discussed in chapter 5 (page 112), a number of possible relationships have been hypothesised between channel involvement and other constructs including perceived channel risk, similarity of the shopping experience, hedonic<sup>27</sup> (pleasure or enjoyment derived from channel use) and channel loyalty. In particular, it seems that perceived channel risk and channel enjoyment are antecedents of channel decision involvement, while channel similarity and channel loyalty appear to result from it. Given the pertinence of these constructs to the notion of channel decision involvement, their measurement could assist in its measurement. However, they cannot be used as surrogate measures because they exist in the conceptual framework as distinct concepts. As a result, a single measure of channel decision was developed to capture the degree of the individuals' concern with the choice of channel (table 6.7).

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<sup>27</sup> Thereafter referred to as channel enjoyment.

**Table 6.7 Measure of channel decision involvement (as used in the questionnaire)**

In deciding from which channel(s) you buy clothes, would you say that,		
I am totally unconcerned about which channel I buy my clothes	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	I am very concerned about which channel I buy my clothes

#### 6.4.2 Issues in measuring perceived risk

Perceived product risk has been extensively investigated and is viewed as a multi-dimensional construct whose conceptualisation is most often synonymous with its empirical measurement. Cox and Rich's (1964) view of perceived product risk, as a function of uncertainty and consequences, is particularly popular among researchers.

However, due to the lack of a sound conceptual meaning, the majority of perceived risk measures appear to be problematic (Peter and Ryan, 1976; Stem et al, 1977) and arbitrary (e.g. Cunningham, 1967a; Cox and Rich, 1964). Some of the problems include measures that omit an overall risk estimate to establish the weight of each component on the overall criterion (Stone and Gronhaug, 1993). Those that include an overall estimate, multiply uncertainty by consequences. Such a multiplicative relationship, which derives from probability theory, is not very clear in the literature (Peter and Ryan, 1976) and therefore there is some scepticism with regard to its accuracy (Bettman, 1973; Stone and Gronhaug, 1993). The fact that many researchers have tried to capture differences in the levels of perceived risk across many product categories (e.g. Bettman, 1973) does not help understanding of the differences in risk perceptions among individuals (Havlena and DeSarbo, 1991). This is because perceived risk is a product-specific phenomenon and as such, it is better understood

when a single product category is studied (Cunningham, 1967a; Zikmund and Scott, 1974).

Some authors have pointed out a few of the conceptual problems of perceived risk which cause inconsistency in its measurement and subsequent incomparability of results. Initially, in decision-making theory, risk is often defined as,

*"The situation where a decision-maker has a priori knowledge of both the consequences of alternatives and their probabilities of occurrence" (Dowling 1986, p194).*

However, in consumer behaviour, perceived risk seems to relate to the concept of uncertainty where neither the consequences of alternatives, nor the probabilities of their occurrence are known. Specifically, Bauer (1960) states that,

*"It is inconceivable that the consumer can consider more than a few of the possible consequences of his actions, and it is seldom that he can anticipate even these few consequences with a high degree of certainty" (p24).*

In spite of this distinction, few authors (e.g. Taylor, 1974) regard perceived risk as equivalent to uncertainty. This view is criticised by Peter and Ryan (1976) who state that,

*"Paradoxically, if perceived risk were equivalent to uncertainty, then if a consumer were perfectly (subjectively) certain that a brand is totally unacceptable for purchase there would be no uncertainty or perceived risk by definition. However, if there is no uncertainty or perceived risk in this situation, why is the brand totally unacceptable?" (p185).*

Various authors (e.g. Dunn et al, 1986) have operationally treated uncertainty in terms of consumers' probabilistic beliefs. Respondents are asked to indicate how likely it is that the purchase of a product or brand would lead to a specific type of loss, such as financial loss or performance loss. However, according to Bauer (1960), respondents cannot possibly know the actual probability of the occurrence of the loss. Similarly, Cunningham (1967a) states that the true or actual probabilities of loss are irrelevant to the consumers in that they can only react to the amount of risk they perceive.

The serious inconsistency which exists in the literature in terms of the conceptualisation and empirical treatment of perceived risk, leads to differing views about its fundamental structure (Ross, 1975). This raises questions about the validity and reliability of perceived risk measures. Authors have examined the various types of validity (face, construct and predictive) and reliability. A consensus seems to have been reached in that many current measures of perceived risk appear to suffer from a number of unresolved measurement-related problems (Dowling, 1986). In particular, some authors (e.g. Bettman, 1973; Jacoby and Kaplan, 1972) have suggested a number of risk types (see chapter 3, page 70) to enable researchers to measure perceived risk with greater precision. However, the fact that perceived risk types are not applicable across purchase situations is an indicator that perceived risk measures suffer from face validity problems. Spence et al (1970) state,

*"While the results of this study give evidence of the face validity of the perceived risk rating scale, is anybody really*

*measuring perceived risk?" (p369).*

The answer to this question may lie within the earlier discussion of uncertainty versus perceived risk. In addition, there is evidence in the literature which indicates that much of the perceived risk research suffers from a criterion-contamination problem (e.g. Ross, 1975). This may be due to the fact that researchers have not been adequately addressing the criterion-related validity of their measures. With regard to this matter Spence et al (1970) state,

*"To our knowledge, the criterion question has not even been raised before, let alone researched in depth" (p369).*

It seems that there are also concerns about construct validity (convergent and discriminant), with Dowling (1986) stating that the available evidence for convergent and discriminant validity of perceived risk measures appears to be weak.

Further, only a few researchers have addressed the reliability issue of their perceived risk measures (e.g. Peter and Ryan, 1976)<sup>28</sup>. Because perceived risk is a difficult and complex concept some authors brief their potential respondents (e.g. Jacoby and Kaplan, 1972) in order to ensure standardisation of the respondents' understanding of perceived risk. However this raises questions as to the reliability of other measures whose potential respondents are not briefed about perceived risk.



Given the confusion which exists in conceptualising and measuring perceived risk, its operationalisation in the context of the present research becomes difficult. Dowling (1986) points out that,

*"Presently, there is little theoretical guidance to help researchers choose among the variety of measures of the perceived risk construct" (p195).*

An initial step in overcoming this difficulty is to consider that the dimensional structure of perceived risk varies from study to study. In fact, various authors have chosen to measure perceived risk using uncertainty and consequences (e.g. Cox and Rich, 1967), certainty and danger (Cunningham, 1967a), probability of loss and importance of loss (Peter and Ryan, 1976; Dunn et al, 1986), uncertainty and importance (Bettman, 1973). According to Ross (1975), in some instances it is difficult to distinguish whether uncertainty or consequences is being measured.

Various problems have been reported with regard to the two components of perceived risk. Cunningham (1967a) states that there is evidence to suggest that consumers in perceiving risk may weight the consequence dimension more heavily than the certainty dimension. This may reflect that the nature and composition of perceived risk is rather idiosyncratic to product categories. Additionally, Peter and Ryan (1976) argue that the importance of loss dimension (consequence) is a product-level phenomenon while probability of loss (uncertainty) operates at a brand level. An

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<sup>28</sup> Peter and Ryan (1976) report test of internal consistency of the two dimensions of perceived risk (probability of loss and importance of loss).

example within the context of this research is that a financial loss resulting from the poor quality of a clothing garment is important to the consumer irrespective of the brand. However, the probability of this loss occurring depends on the brand. Consequently, in the context of this research, the 'importance of the consequence' dimension seems to be a more meaningful measure of perceived product risk than uncertainty. The reason being that this research intends to measure the variables involved (including perceived risk) at a product level rather than a brand level.

#### 6.4.2.1 Operationalising perceived risk in clothes

To measure perceived risk in clothes it is possible to infer the uncertainty dimension while using a direct measure for the importance of the consequence dimension. Uncertainty is indicated in those situations where individuals are engaged in a process of information seeking. Three items are developed which capture risk-related variables (information seeking and self-confidence<sup>29</sup>) for measuring uncertainty indirectly<sup>30</sup> (table 6.8). In order to capture the importance of the consequence dimension, a composite of four direct measures was used, three of which correspond to two existing types of perceived risk (performance and social)<sup>31</sup>. To accommodate the fact that risk types may be specific to the product category studied (Zikmund and Scott, 1973) the fourth measure was developed without any specific type of risk in mind.

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<sup>29</sup> As already noted in chapter 5 a hypothesised relationship exists between information seeking, self-confidence and perceived risk.

<sup>30</sup> Bettman (1973) used an indirect measure of uncertainty.

<sup>31</sup> These two types of risks were chosen because they seem the most relevant in the purchase of clothes.

**Table 6.8 Uncertainty Indicators**

<b>Information seeking measures</b>		
How much attention to detail do you pay when you choose clothes?		
I examine all aspects of the item (stitching, seams, etc.) very carefully	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	If it fits well and looks good that's fine
How much time do you spend deciding what clothes to buy?		
As much time as I can	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	As little as possible
<b>Self-confidence measure</b>		
How confident are you about being able to judge the quality of a garment?		
Very Confident	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	Not at all Confident

A questionnaire piloting was initiated with respondents being asked to indicate any kind of risk they associated with clothes shopping. A list of six items was derived and in a second evaluation of the questionnaire another two items were added. Table 6.9 illustrates the four measures of the consequence dimension.

**Table 6.9 Measures of the consequence dimension of perceived risk in clothes**

When shopping for clothes how concern are you about the possibility of buying something that will not perform as you expect it to do?

Not at all Concerned

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

Very Concerned

When you shop for clothes how concern are you about the possibility of buying something that proves to be unsuitable in terms of:

Least Concerned

1 2 3 4 5

Most Concerned

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Size               | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Style              | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Fit                | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Materials (fabric) | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Colour             | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Washability        | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Stitching quality  | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Overall quality    | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |

How concern are you about buying clothes that your family and friends might not like?

I buy what I like

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

Their opinion matters

Which of the following would concern you when shopping for your clothes?

Unimportant

1 2 3 4 5

Important

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. I might get it cheaper in the sales              | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. The garment might be of poor quality             | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The fabric might cause allergies                 | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Will it still fit after the first wash           | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. It might be available elsewhere at a lower price | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. The item won't match an existing outfit          | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I want it but am not sure when I'd wear it       | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. It might be difficult to wash or iron it         | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |

#### 6.4.2.2 Operationalising perceived channel risk

In measuring perceived channel risk it is imperative to emphasise the limitations in the current measurements of risk in retail patronage. Research in this domain has been stagnant with much of the existing literature more than two decades old<sup>32</sup>. As a result, most studies primarily deal with various types of store-based formats. There is one exception, which deals exclusively with catalogue (e.g. Jasper and Ouellette, 1994). In addition, the studies appear to adopt existing measures of perceived product risk in a patronage context without questioning their appropriateness. Perceived risk has mostly been measured using two dimensions. In particular, Cox and Rich (1967), Hawes and Lumpkin (1986), Dash et al (1976) used certainty and seriousness [of the consequence], while Festervant et al (1986) used probability of loss and importance of loss. Conversely, Spence et al (1970) adopted an uni-dimensional approach to treat risk, while Jasper and Ouellette (1994) captured perceived channel risk indirectly using a set of indicators. The majority of these studies<sup>33</sup> fail to either interpret risk components in terms of existing classifications (e.g. financial, social, performance etc.) or scale risk components in terms of specific channel attributes. These limitations seem to undermine the attempt to measure perceived channel risk in the context of the present research.

In the context of this research, any approach to interpret risk dimensions using existing classifications seems questionable. However, due to the considerable number of variables involved, any attempt to derive risk types goes beyond the scope of this

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<sup>32</sup> The most recent study was conducted in 1994 (Jasper and Ouellette).

<sup>33</sup> With the exception of Festervant et al (1986) and Prasad (1975).

research. Alternatively, it is acknowledged that financial risk (e.g. loss of credit card information) is a significant determinant of channel risk (Janverpaa and Todd, 1997), and therefore useful in the present research.

Given the dissenting views about the dimensional structure of perceived product risk coupled with the fact that consumers may weight one of its two dimensions more than the other<sup>34</sup>, a composite of measures has been developed to capture perceived channel risk in three different channels (retail store, catalogue and Internet). In developing these measures, a number of issues were taken into consideration. Firstly, because clothing seems to determine some of the channel attributes (e.g. price) it is not possible to isolate it in a channel context. Secondly, to be able to compare the three channels in terms of possible risk dimensions deriving from their attributes, those attributes should be common among them.

Four measures were developed capturing two dimensions of perceived channel risk. Two of the items measure the consequence dimension (poor decision and financial loss). One item is purported to measure the degree of risk in terms of defraud and one captures the degree of certainty of the outcome of the choice in terms of four attributes.

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<sup>34</sup> Possibly due to product, channel or respondent effects.

**Table 6.10 Measures of perceived channel risk**

How certain are you that you would get exactly what you want from each of the following channels in terms of:

1= Very Uncertain 5= Very Certain	1. Retail Store	2. Catalogue	3. Internet
1. Range of Products/Brands	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Prices	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Customer Service	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Product Quality	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>

Please indicate how risky you think each of the following channels is in terms of being defrauded.

High Risk	1	2	3	4	5	Low Risk				
1. Retail store	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Catalogue	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Internet	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>

How concerned are you (or might you be) about the possibility of buying something of poor quality, when shopping for your clothes via each of the following channels?

Most Concerned	1	2	3	4	5	Least Concerned				
1. Retail store	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Catalogue	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Internet	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>

How concerned are you (or might you be) about the possibility of credit card fraud when shopping for your clothes via each of the following channels?

Most Concerned	1	2	3	4	5	Least Concerned
1. Retail store		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Catalogue		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Internet		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### 6.4.3 Issues in measuring loyalty

The measurement of brand loyalty is in a chaotic state. In addition to being a complex construct its empirical measurement is undermined by the conceptual inconsistencies in the literature. Despite the breakthrough by Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) in providing an elaborate conceptual definition of brand loyalty, no unified measure has yet emerged (Mellens et al, 1996). Gentry and Brown (1980) state that,

*"One serious problem with the concept is that there is a wide range of operational definitions available, most of which have both strong supporters and strong detractors" (p713).*

The operational definitions are often classified in the literature as behavioural and attitudinal measures (Odin et al, 2001; Mellens et al, 1996). Initially, behavioural measures infer brand loyalty from the consumers observed purchase behaviour. Such measures include the percentage (or proportion) of purchase measures (e.g. Cunningham, 1956), the sequence of purchase measures (Tucker, 1964; Guadagni and Little, 1983; Kahn et al, 1986) and measures based on aggregated switching matrices (e.g. Colombo and Morrison, 1989; Bayus, 1992; Dekimpe et al, 1997).

Conversely, attitudinal measures are based on consumers declarations and not on overt purchase behaviour. Authors following this approach often infer brand loyalty by measuring consumer attitudes toward particular brands (e.g. Jacoby 1971; Raju 1980; Bloemer and Kasper, 1995; Massad and Reardon, 1996), and their commitment to those brands (e.g. Traylor 1981; Martin and Goodell, 1991). Commitment to a



brand is viewed as the link between the consumer and the loyalty object, and may be understood as describing attitude strength (Samuelsen and Sandvik, 1997). A person who holds a favourable and strong attitude towards a brand is said to be committed to that brand and likely to exhibit consistent behavioural loyalty towards that brand. Bloemer and Kasper (1995) in separating true from spurious loyalty (repeat purchase behaviour) state that brand commitment is a necessary condition for true brand loyalty to occur (also Bloemer and Ruyter, 1998).

Both approaches have been criticised in terms of their advantages and disadvantages. Behavioural measures seem to lack of a conceptual basis in that they suffer from the inability to distinguish between brand loyalty and repeat purchase behaviour (Jacoby and Chestnut, 1978; Dick and Basu, 1994; Odin et al, 2001). This may be an indicator of weak content validity. In addition, they have limited diagnostic power (Dubois and Laurent, 1999) and thus cannot explain the inherent motivations of brand loyalty. Further, in examining the proportion and sequence of purchase approaches, Odin et al (2001) report evidence of low convergent validity.

Attitudinal measures have been criticised because they solely rely on consumer statements and as such they may not accurately represent reality (Mellens et al, 1996). In addition, according to Odin et al (2001) attitudinal measures do not capture brand loyalty per-se, but instead use other concepts such as commitment as surrogates. Table 6.11 summarises the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches.

**Table 6.11 Advantages and disadvantages of behavioural and attitudinal measures of brand loyalty**

	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Behavioural Measures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Based on actual observed behaviour</li> <li>2. Non-incidental</li> <li>3. Easy to collect</li> <li>4. Based on fairly detailed and reliable data</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of conceptual basis (content validity questionable)</li> <li>2. Limited diagnostic power (cannot explain how and why brand loyalty develops)</li> <li>3. Cannot distinguish brand loyalty from repeat purchase</li> <li>4. Capture only static outcome of a dynamic process</li> <li>5. More sensitive to short-run fluctuations</li> <li>6. Difficult to pick-up right decision unit</li> <li>7. Based on loyalty vs. disloyalty</li> </ol>
<b>Attitudinal Measures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Able to distinguish brand loyalty from repeat purchase</li> <li>2. Less sensitive to short-run fluctuations</li> <li>3. Easier to pick up the right decision unit</li> <li>4. Easier in collecting data (use of interval scales)</li> <li>5. Capture the degree of brand loyalty (intensity)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Only rely on consumer statements (possible invalid representation of reality)</li> <li>2. Do not measure loyalty per se, but other concepts (e.g. commitment), content validity questionable</li> <li>3. Incidental</li> <li>4. Harder to collect</li> </ol>

Source: Adapted from Mellens et al, (1996)

It is apparent that the validity of both approaches is questionable due to their serious limitation to represent brand loyalty. In addition, Odin et al (2001) state that,

*"The development of brand loyalty measures fails by the lack of investigation of their reliability and their validity"(p76) [also Jacoby, 1976].*

Various researchers have argued that brand loyalty should be measured by using both behavioural and attitudinal components (e.g. Dick and Basu, 1994; Baldinger and Robinson, 1996; Walker and Knox, 1997 etc.), while others adhere to the behavioural approach (e.g. Odin et al, 2001; Laurent and Kapferer, 1984; Dekimpe et al, 1997 etc.).

#### 6.4.3.1 Operationalising brand loyalty in clothes

It is beyond the scope of this research to examine individual or aggregate levels of consumer loyalty to specific brands of clothes. [As already has been discussed, the conceptual model operates on a product level rather than a brand level]. Instead, the key concern is to uncover patterns that exhibit a consumer's general propensity to be brand loyal in clothing. This view of loyalty as a propensity is consistent with Uncles and Laurent (1997) who state that,

*"It is very rare for one person, to always make the same choice over any reasonable length of time.....as a consequence consumer loyalty is best seen as a propensity, and not something that can be attained exclusively for an indefinite length of time" (p402).*

Further, to address this query in the context of the present research, brand loyalty is inferred using both a behavioural and an attitudinal approach. Two measures have been developed to capture the consumers' purchasing behaviour and preference towards a brand. It is thought that by combining both attitude and behaviour may enhance the validity and reliability of the brand loyalty measure.

Respondents were asked whether they have a favourite brand of clothing. To examine their behaviour and attitude towards that brand they were asked to indicate the strength of their preference towards that brand and the times they bought it in the last twelve months (table 6.12).

**Table 6.12 Brand loyalty measures**

Do you have a favourite brand of clothes?

1. Yes ☐

a. If 'Yes', how strong is your preference for that brand?

Not Very Strong    1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐    Very Strong

b. How many times have you bought that brand in the last twelve months?

1. Once ☐ 2. Twice ☐ 3. Three times ☐ 4. Four times ☐ 5. More than five ☐

2. No ☐ Go to Q2.3

#### 6.4.3.2 Operationalising channel loyalty

According to Laaksonen (1987), only a small amount of loyalty research has been undertaken in the retail context. This research focuses mainly on behavioural operationalisations of store (e.g. Cunningham, 1961; Enis and Paul 1970; East et al, 1997; Sivadas and Baker-Prewitt, 2000; Knox and Denison, 2000) and catalogue loyalty (e.g. McDonald, 1993). Knox and Denison (2000) classified the behavioural measures of store loyalty in four categories, including patronage measures (e.g. Lamb and Goodhart, 1989), switching ratios, budget measures (e.g. Cunningham, 1961) and lastly, composite measures (e.g. Enis and Paul, 1970).

Conversely, Macintosh and Lockshin (1997) used a composite measure of attitude and behaviour to capture store loyalty. Composite measures of store loyalty are preferred in that they have the advantage of improving construct validity (Laaksonen, 1987).

The examination of channel loyalty in the context of this research is the first in the literature. It is therefore exploratory and its operationalisation rather difficult given the apparent conceptual limitations. In addition, because channel loyalty operates at a format level (e.g. store, catalogue, Internet) its relationship with commitment as a potential indicator is not clear. From a conceptual point of view, commitment in a channel context seems to focus on a single format (e.g. retail store) while examining the individuals' commitment to specific stores.

Following these limitations, the operationalisation of channel loyalty in the context of this research is based on a single behavioural item, which measures the number of channels respondents have used for purchasing their clothes in the last twelve months (table 6.13).

**Table 6.13 Channel loyalty measure**

Please indicate which of the following channels have you used when shopping for your clothes during the last twelve months (Please tick all that apply)			
1. Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Digital TV	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Catalogue (account)	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Retail store(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Catalogue (card purchase)	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Direct Mail	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	

#### 6.4.4 Issues in measuring brand similarity

Following the discussion in chapter 3 (page 94), the notion of perceived brand similarity has received diminutive research attention. Most often it has been treated as a component or a consequence of another concept (e.g. Mittal, 1989; Zaichkowsky, 1985, 1986). Authors (e.g. Mittal, 1989) have often utilised a uni-dimensional approach to measure this notion, usually in the form of overall estimates (e.g. 'do you think that the various types of brands of this product available in the market are all very alike or are all very different?'). Overall measures may be unreliable in that they may be out of context. A respondent cannot possibly answer such questions without prior experience of the alternative brands of a given product class. However, this is impossible in product categories with large numbers of alternative brands (e.g. clothes). To overcome this, questions may be asked with regard to particular brands of the chosen product category, where respondents may indicate the extend of difference or similarity among those brands on a number of attributes (e.g. price, quality etc.). Such an approach was adopted for measuring perceived brand similarity in the context of this research.

##### 6.4.4.1 Operationalising brand and channel similarity

To ensure the validity of the measure, respondents were initially asked to list up to five brands of clothes that they currently own. This item purported to direct the respondents into the right frame of mind for answering the proceeding question. Subsequently, they were asked to think about the five brands and indicate the extent of their similarity or dissimilarity on a number of criteria using itemised rating scales,

ranging from one to five (table 6.14) .The criteria consisted of ten attributes particular to clothing which have been re-evaluated on a number of occasions and agreed upon in association with the retailer. These included, price, material, brand image, fit, colour, stitching quality, style, care instructions, overall quality and fashionability. In extending the notion of similarity to the context of the channel, a number of issues attract particular consideration. Initially, this concept has not been addressed in a channel context, even though there have been previous attempts to compare the three channels according to their ability to provide particular benefits such as amount of information, convenience etc. (e.g. Salste, 1996). However, this is not a true attempt to explore the similarity issue among the channels. This may be hard to achieve in that these channels differ greatly in the extent to which they can be compared. The notion of comparing is based on the inherent assumption that the objects to be compared have a fundamentally common basis. For example, attributes of clothes (e.g. colour) assume the same meaning across all alternative brands. This does not seem to happen in channels, when attempting to compare store and non-store formats<sup>35</sup>. For example, it seems unreliable to measure the extent of the similarity (or difference) among the three channels in terms of their convenience, unless convenience is thought of in terms of multiple dimensions related to each channel (e.g. speed of ordering). In doing so, it is apparent that various dimensions of convenience are not pertinent to some channels<sup>36</sup>. In this way, one may argue that convenience and other retail attributes are specific to channels.

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<sup>35</sup> Alternatively this would be possible if one focuses exclusively on a single format, for example store and compares the different types such as discount, department etc.

<sup>36</sup> Convenience dimensions associated with non-store formats may not apply in store formats.

This is a subject which deserves further attention. However, this goes beyond the scope of the research. Given this discussion, the notion of channel similarity is measured in terms of the consumers' perceived similarity of the shopping experience among the three channels. Since the concern here is not to explore the various dimensions of retail attributes for each channel, shopping experience was chosen because unlike other retail attributes, it seems to have an overall common meaning in all three channels. Because shopping experience is seen as a mediating variable and due to constraints in the length of the questionnaire a single measure was employed (table 6.14).



**Table 6.14 Measures of brand and of channel similarity**

**Brand similarity**

Please think about these five brands. How similar are these brands on each of the following criteria?

	Extremely Dissimilar	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely Similar
1. Price						1	2
2. Material (fabric)						1	2
3. Brand image						1	2
4. Fit						1	2
5. Colour						1	2
6. Stitching quality						1	2
7. Style						1	2
8. Care instructions						1	2
9. Quality						1	2
10. Fashionability						1	2

Note: By fashionability we mean whether a garment is fashionable, contemporary, classic etc.

**Channel similarity**

Please rate each of the following pairs of shopping channels based on their similarity of the shopping experience.

	Very Similar	1	2	3	4	5	Very Different
1. Retail store vs. Catalogue						1	2
2. Retail store vs. Internet						1	2
3. Catalogue vs. Internet						1	2

#### 6.4.5 Issues in measuring hedonism

The earlier discussion of the hedonic aspect (chapters 3 and 5) highlights its role in both brand and channel choice. The notion of product involvement relates to the hedonic aspect in that consumers attach hedonic meanings to particular product categories which are sources (or antecedents) of product involvement. Given the fact

that this notion seems to have considerable face validity (Spangerberg et al, 1997), it is possible to treat the hedonic aspect as a component of product involvement (e.g. Kapferer and Laurent 1985a, 1985b, 1985c). Consistent with this approach is the operationalisation of the hedonic aspect in the context of this research, where it is viewed as the pleasure in clothing and enjoyment in the use of a channel for the purchase of clothing.

#### 6.4.5.1 Operationalising pleasure in clothing and channel enjoyment

Pleasure is viewed as a dimension of product involvement and is measured using four items, which represent part of the scale purported to measure involvement with clothes. The origin and development of these items has already been discussed in section 6.4.1.1 of this chapter (page 153).

In a channel context the hedonic aspect is seen as referring to the enjoyment derived from the use of a particular channel for the purchase of a specific product category. In addition, enjoyment is viewed as a dimension of enduring channel involvement, however their relationship is not explored in the context of this research. As such, channel enjoyment is measured using a single item which asks respondents to indicate how enjoyable they find shopping for clothes via the three channels (table 6.15).

**Table 6.15 Measure of channel enjoyment**

How enjoyable do you (or might you) find shopping for clothes via each of the following channels?										
Least Enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5	Most Enjoyable				
1. Retail store	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Catalogue	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Internet	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>

The discussion of the operationalisation of channel enjoyment concludes the section of the product and channel measures. The focus is now shifted towards brand switching. The subsequent section deals with the measurement of brand switching in the context of this research.

### 6.5 Brand switching

Consumers switch brands for a number of factors including external (e.g. price promotions) and internal (e.g. variety seeking). The Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) model distinguishes these factors, while focusing on variety seeking as an important explanatory construct for brand switching. The authors also propose a number of other variables (e.g. product factors) which seem to mediate the occurrence of variety-induced brand switching.

The distinction between external and internal motivations of brand switching is conceptually significant but on an empirical level it has been ignored (Van Trijp, et al, 1996). In examining consumer brand switching, various authors (e.g. Givon 1984; Lattin and McAlister, 1997; Bawa 1990) have ignored the distinction between

internal and external motivations assuming that all observed switching is variety-induced. As a result, the validity and reliability of such measures is threatened (Kahn et al, 1986). Similarly, Mazursky et al (1987) state that,

*"Rarely have marketing researchers directly contrasted consumers' attribution of switching behaviour to either intrinsic or extrinsic causes" (p19).*

Conversely, a few authors (e.g. Mazursky et al 1987; Van Trijp et al, 1996) have adopted a more rigorous approach where they contrast internal and external motivations on consumer brand switching behaviour.

Most often, researchers utilise panel data to investigate brand switching. The use of this method compared to others, such as survey data which are difficult to generate and costly to produce (Berne et al, 1997), is particularly appropriate when examining phenomena like brand switching, because it provides an accurate record of spending over long periods of time (Van Trijp et al, 1996). In addition, it is free from errors since it does not rely on respondent recall of past behaviour. The main disadvantage is that it is non-representative (Churchill, 1999; East et al, 1997).

As discussed in chapter 2 (page 38) brand switching has been most often modelled in terms of probabilities and in a few instances as a function of marketing variables (e.g. Guadagni and Little, 1983; Carpenter and Lehman, 1985). Such models attempt to predict brand switching using the effects of past purchases, price and promotional

activities in order to investigate changes in the market shares of brands over a period of time (Woodside and Clokey, 1975; Ansari et al, 1995). Some models have also tried to combine the effects of various variables, including variety seeking, inertia, marketing variables, customer characteristics (e.g. demographics) within the same model (e.g. Ansari et al, 1995; Morgan and Dev, 1994).

In the context of the present research it is emphasised that brand switching is viewed exclusively as the result of the need for variety while examining the impact of product and channel characteristics. It is not in the interest of this research to investigate individual or aggregate levels of consumer brand switching. As such, effects like past purchases and external factors, which operate at a brand level to predict consumer switching, go beyond the scope of this research.

Instead, the focus is directed towards the product category, with measures developed to capture the product characteristics on a product level as opposed to a brand level. Given the 'product-oriented' focus of the research, brand switching is viewed and operationalised as the consumer disposition to exhibit switching patterns in clothing.

A set of variables some of which have been utilised in previous research (Morgan and Dev, 1994; McDonald 1993) serve as surrogate measures of brand switching. These include purchase frequency, budget spent on clothes, and the number of alternatives considered when shopping (table 6.16).

**Table 6.16 Indicators of brand switching**

How frequently do you buy clothes? (Please tick only one option)

1. Once a year	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Once a month	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Twice a year	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. More than once a month	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Every three months	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
		.....	

Approximately how much money do you think you spend on your clothes each year?

1. Less than £250	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. £1250-£1500	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. £250-£500	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. £1500-£1750	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. £500-£750	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. £1750-£2000	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. £750-£1000	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Over £2000	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. £1000-£1250	<input type="checkbox"/>		

When taking a planned shopping trip for clothing, how many alternative brands do you consider looking at?

1. Only one brand	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Two/three brands	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Four/five brands	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. More than five brands	<input type="checkbox"/>
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### 6.6 Summary of the chapter

A questionnaire with fixed alternative response structures is used to measure the various elements within the conceptual framework. It is administered on-line via a combination of e-mail and hypermedia (www) due to speed and cost advantages.

A number of items most of which derive from previous research have been utilised to measure the constructs in the context of clothes shopping. Clothing was selected since it is considered appropriate with the research inquiry (in terms of being saleable through all three channels involved in this research) and used extensively by previous literature in the area of non-store patronage.

The operationalisation of the conceptual framework highlights the limitations in the literature and the complexity which exists in measuring particularly involvement, perceived risk and brand loyalty in consumer behaviour research. Following the measurements of the constructs, the next stage involves the selection of the research sample and collection of the data. Chapter 7 begins with an outline of the research sample, and data collection emphasising the issue of response rates and the ways to improve them.

## **7.0 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

The questionnaire was directed to a research sample of three thousand individuals derived from a company's customer database. A pilot test was initiated to establish preliminary indications of response rates. The achieved response rate was 19%. To familiarise with the data, responses were examined to derive statistical descriptions of the sample in terms of gender, age and Internet use for shopping. Because of the large number of items involved, it was considered necessary to summarise the data before testing the conceptual model. Using exploratory factor analysis individual, product and channel data were examined in terms of possible relationships within and among them. Correlation analysis was then used to test the hypotheses developed for channel characteristics. The conceptual model was examined using regression analysis. Three models were generated to investigate the relationship between optimal stimulation level and brand switching (model 1), product characteristics and brand switching (model 2) and channel characteristics and brand switching (model 3). The results are discussed extensively in a subsequent section which also includes some additional analysis of the data.

### **Research sample**

The decision over the selection of the research sample is based on a number of issues. In particular, the use of e-mail as a method of administering the questionnaire determines that the research sample should consist of subjects with Internet access and e-mail accounts. In addition, it is considered imperative that the potential



respondents have prior shopping experience with all three channels involved in the research. To fulfil these requirements, the sample should ideally come from a company's database, which maintains operations in all three channels. Given the product category chosen, the best example of such company within the UK clothing sector is probably Next PLC. Following consecutive contact with the e-commerce and market research managers, the company allowed access to its customer database from which a random sample of three thousand individual e-mail addresses was drawn. One third of the sample consisted of individuals who have previously shopped on-line with Next, while the remaining two thousands consisted of individuals that have registered their e-mail addresses with the company and with no prior record of Internet purchases.

Further, the issue of response rates has been extensively discussed in the marketing literature. Although the normal level of response to Internet questionnaires has yet to be established (West, 1999), various authors have discussed possible inhibitors to high response rates in mail questionnaires (Heberlein and Baumgartner, 1978; Dillman et al, 1993). Specifically, questionnaire length has been examined in previous studies, however its role in the reduction of response rates is inconclusive (Dillman et al, 1993). In addition, Heberlein and Baumgartner, (1978) found that,

*"There was no significant zero-order correlation between any of the length measures and overall responses" (p452).*

Concerns with regard to the length of the research questionnaire were addressed during its development in co-operation with Next PLC. Reduction of the questions was not possible, as it would potentially jeopardise the accuracy of the measures, as such a pilot testing was initiated to establish preliminary indication of expected response rates. Also, given the content of the questionnaire (clothes shopping), it was anticipated that respondents would be interested in completing the questionnaire and therefore increasing response rates. With regard to this, Heberlein and Baumgartner, (1978) state that,

*"When the content of the questionnaire is salient to the respondent and the respondent is knowledgeable and interested in the topic, the cost responding [low response rates] may be reduced" (p458).*

In addition, to encourage even stronger response rates, a completion incentive was offered by the retailer. Upon completing the questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate their e-mail address to participate in a price draw for a hundred pounds worth of Next vouchers. Completions incentives seem to have a positive effect on response rates and they are particularly encouraged in the case of e-mail questionnaires (Dibb et al, 2001).

The questionnaire was directed to a designated sample of three hundred individuals during a weekday. Potential respondents received a URL address in the form of Hypertext link included in an e-mail message transmitted by the retailer. The e-mail invited the receivers to visit the web page to complete the questionnaire. A brief

summary of the research purpose and the completion incentive were highlighted. Sixty questionnaires were received which mount to twenty percent (20%) response rate within a cut-off point of two weeks. The speed of responses was extremely fast, 53% of the overall responses (32 questionnaires) were received on the same day as transmission.

#### Data collection

Given the satisfactory response rates indicated by the pilot testing, the questionnaire was launched to the sample on a weekday using the same transmission method as the pilot testing. Three weeks were allowed as a cut-off point, however the response was overwhelming with 41.3% of responses received the day of transmission. Response rates were steady for the first week, where 90 % of the responses were received, while a drop was observed in the last two weeks. Overall response rate was 19% and with the inclusion of the 60 pilot test responses the overall cases had risen to 628. A follow-up of the questionnaire was deemed unnecessary since the response rates provided an adequate number of cases sufficient for conducting data analysis. Of the 628 cases, 71 were excluded as unusable (e.g. incomplete) while the remaining 557 underwent serious data cleaning and coding. In particular, each of the 557 cases was individually assessed to detect response accuracy and inconsistencies.

**Table 7.1 Questionnaire response rates**

<b>Data collection</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Pilot testing	300	60	20%
Main mailer	3000	568	19%
Total	3300	628	19%
Cases excluded		71	
Cases used for analysis		557	

The subsequent analysis is divided into three sections; the reduction of the data, modelling brand switching and lastly the investigation of association. However, prior to this discussion it is important to familiarise the reader with the data. Thus section 7.1.1 provides a statistical description of the responses.

#### 7.1 Data analysis

The data was analysed using SPSS (v.10). The initial concern was to establish the existence or lack of any non-response bias. Following Armstrong and Overton (1977), a series of independent sample t-tests was initiated for 44 variables, (product involvement and optimal stimulation level) for early versus late respondents with a cut point established for the case with the identification number 460<sup>37</sup>. No significant differences were identified between the groups, indicating that the sample has indeed originated from a single population (see appendix 2, page 302). The focus is now shifted to the sample characteristics.

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<sup>37</sup> The late responses were received the last two weeks of the cut-off point.

#### 7.1.1 Descriptive statistics

As discussed in chapter 6 the research sample consisted of individuals with and without a registered on-line shopping record with Next PLC.<sup>38</sup> Given their profile as Internet users, they are expected to use the Internet as a shopping channel. In particular, initial results of frequency distributions revealed that 95.5% (n=557) of the respondents, shop on-line of which 76.4% shop on the Next Internet site. In addition, 86% of respondents (n=537) are female of which 95% claim to have used the Internet for shopping. Of the 76 male respondents 96% use the Internet for shopping. In terms of age, 85% of the respondents are aged between 25 to 44.

The following discussion deals with the examination of gender, age and Internet use for shopping to distinguish differences among respondents, in terms of frequency of shopping, budget spent on clothing, factors considered when shopping and perceived risk. This kind of analysis aims at enhancing the familiarisation with the data as well as drawing differences among males and females, younger (15-24) and older (45-54) respondents, and finally Internet and non-Internet shoppers.

#### Gender differences

There have been attempts to investigate the inter-gender differences of shopping behaviour, however these focused on the area of catalogue shopping (e.g. Eastlick and Feinberg, 1994). The authors investigated the differences of males and females in terms of catalogue patronage motives including merchandise motives, service motives

and convenience-oriented motives. In addition, other research on gender focuses primarily on the female consumer especially when the product involved in the study is clothing (e.g. Summers et al. 1992; Smallwood and Wiener, 1987). In an attempt to enhance the understanding of the gender differences, males and females are compared in terms of frequency of clothes shopping, budget spent on clothes, factors considered when shopping and perceived risk. Significant differences were observed between male and females in terms of frequency of clothes shopping (tables 7.2 and 7.3). Mean values show that females shop more frequently than males and spend relatively more money on clothes<sup>39</sup>. In addition, males and females appear to differ in terms of the factors they consider important when shopping<sup>40</sup>. In particular, price and garment care are more important to females than males, while males seem to be more concerned with the brand. Conversely, factors like fit, style and quality appear to be equally important to both males and females (tables 7.4 and 7.5).

Examination of the uncertainty in clothes also displays inter-gender differences. Female respondents spend more time deciding about their choice, however, males are more concerned [than females] about,

1. the fit of the garment after the first wash
2. matching the garment with an existing outfit
3. the uncertainty as to when to wear the garment

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<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that the sample used for the questionnaire testing had exactly the same structure in that one third was consisted of Next Internet shoppers while the remaining with individuals registering their address with the company but without prior Internet shopping record.

<sup>39</sup> Frequency of clothes shopping and budget spent on clothes are measured on a scale of 1-5 (1=low-5=high).

<sup>40</sup> Importance is measured on the scale of 1-5 (1=high, 5=low).

4. the care of the garment

**Tables 7.2 and 7.3 Examination of inter-gender differences in terms of frequency of clothes shopping and budget spent on clothes (tests and statistics)**

Independent Samples Test			Group Statistics		
	t-test for Equality of Means		Gender	N	Mean
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)			
Frequency of clothes shopping	3.913	.000	Male	76	3.79
			Female	458	4.22
Budget spent on clothes	1.674	.095	Male	76	2.28
			Female	456	2.52

Source: SPSS outputs

**Tables 7.4 and 7.5 Examination of inter-gender differences in terms of the factors considered important when shopping for clothes (tests and statistics)**

Independent Samples Test			Group Statistics		
	t-test for Equality of Means		Gender	N	Mean
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)			
Price	2.486	.013	Male	76	2.43
			Female	459	2.10
Quality	.252	.801	Male	76	1.61
			Female	458	1.57
Fabric	1.448	.148	Male	76	2.11
			Female	459	1.92
Style	.289	.773	Male	76	1.76
			Female	456	1.73
Brand name	2.975	.003	Male	75	3.53
			Female	455	3.11
Care	3.098	.002	Male	75	3.07
			Female	455	2.64
Fit	-.105	.916	Male	76	1.42
			Female	457	1.44
Fashionability	-2.080	.038	Male	76	2.16
			Female	455	2.43
Colour	.990	.323	Male	76	2.09
			Female	446	1.96

Source: SPSS outputs

**Tables 7.6 and 7.7 Examination of inter-gender differences in terms perceived risk (tests and statistics)**

Independent Samples Test			Group Statistics		
	-test for Equality of Means		Gender	N	Mean
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)			
Attention to detail	-.962	.337	Male	76	2.57
			Female	461	2.72
Time spend deciding	-4.295	.000	Male	76	2.84
			Female	461	3.45
Confident about judging garment	1.504	.133	Male	76	1.91
			Female	461	1.76
Get it cheaper in sales	.522	.602	Male	76	3.01
			Female	457	2.93
Garment might be of poor quality	-.437	.662	Male	75	4.11
			Female	456	4.16
Fabric might cause allergies	-.812	.417	Male	74	2.28
			Female	445	2.43
Will it fit after first wash	-3.860	.000	Male	75	3.28
			Female	454	3.84
Might be available elsewhere at	-1.636	.102	Male	75	2.64
			Female	458	2.90
Won't match an existing outfit	-4.461	.000	Male	75	2.36
			Female	453	3.05
Not sure when to wear it	-5.700	.000	Male	73	2.47
			Female	450	3.33
Difficult to wash or iron	-4.483	.000	Male	76	2.67
			Female	456	3.36

Source: SPSS outputs

#### Age differences

Respondents between the ages of 15-24 were compared with those aged between 45-54 in terms of frequency of clothes shopping, budget spent on clothes, important factors when shopping and perceived risk. Age is considered an important demographic factor for distinguishing (or segmenting) consumers. These age groups were chosen specifically to reveal the maximum extent of differences or similarities among respondents.

Results of independent sample t-tests indicate significant differences between respondents in terms of frequency of clothes shopping (tables 7.8 and 7.9). Table 7.9 shows that younger respondents buy clothes more frequently than older respondents.



In addition, younger respondents are more concerned about the brand name and fashionability when shopping for clothes than older respondents. Older respondents appear to be more concerned about the care of clothes (tables 7.10 and 7.11).

Further, in examining the differences in terms of perceived risk, significant differences were observed in terms of a number of dimensions (tables 7.12 and 7.13).

In particular, younger respondents are more concerned with the,

1. the fabric causing allergies
2. the fitting of the garment after the first wash
3. matching the garment with an existing outfit
4. the care of the garment in terms of washing and ironing.

On the other hand, older respondents are more concerned about getting the garment cheaper in sales (price consciousness). Additionally, they are more confident in judging the quality of the garment and less concerned about the opinions of others [than younger respondents].

**Tables 7.8 and 7.9 Examination of inter-age differences among respondents in terms of frequency of clothes shopping (test and statistics)**

Independent Samples Test			Group Statistics		
	t-test for Equality of Means		Age	N	Mean
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	15-24	29	4.38
Frequency of clothes shopping	2.684	.009	45-54	42	3.79

Source: SPSS output

**Tables 7.10 and 7.11 Examination of inter-age differences in terms of the factors considered important when shopping for clothes (tests and statistics)**

Independent Samples Test		
	t-test for Equality of Means	
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Price	-.953	.344
Quality	-1.066	.290
Fabric	.828	.411
Style	-1.083	.283
Brand name	-2.562	.013
Care	2.276	.026
Fit	-.774	.442
Fashionability	-2.779	.007
Colour	-1.101	.275

Group Statistics			
	Age	N	Mean
Price	15-24	29	1.97
	45-54	41	2.22
Quality	15-24	29	1.55
	45-54	40	1.88
Fabric	15-24	29	2.03
	45-54	42	1.81
Style	15-24	29	1.76
	45-54	40	2.08
Brand name	15-24	28	2.46
	45-54	41	3.17
Care	15-24	29	2.83
	45-54	40	2.30
Fit	15-24	29	1.48
	45-54	39	1.74
Fashionability	15-24	29	2.07
	45-54	38	2.76
Colour	15-24	29	2.03
	45-54	38	2.34

Source: SPSS outputs

**Tables 7.12 and 7.13 Examination of inter-age differences in terms of perceived risk (tests and statistics)**

Independent Samples Test		
	t-test for Equality of Means	
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Attention to detail	.693	.491
Time spend deciding	.822	.414
Confident about judging	2.174	.033
Social risk	2.340	.022
Get it cheaper in sales	2.233	.029
Garment might be of poor	-1.433	.156
Fabric might cause	-2.954	.004
Will it fit after first wash	-2.681	.009
Available Elsewhere at	1.471	.146
Won't match existing outfit	-3.024	.004
Not sure when to wear it	.912	.365
Difficult to wash or iron	-3.052	.003

Group Statistics			
	Age	N	Mean
Attention to detail	15-24	29	2.76
	45-54	42	2.55
Time spend deciding	15-24	29	3.62
	45-54	42	3.38
Confident about judging garment quality	15-24	29	2.24
	45-54	42	1.74
Social risk	15-24	29	2.31
	45-54	42	1.67
Get it cheaper in sales	15-24	29	3.48
	45-54	41	2.78
Garment might be of poor quality	15-24	29	3.72
	45-54	42	4.10
Fabric might cause allergies	15-24	29	2.07
	45-54	40	3.08
Will it fit after first wash	15-24	29	3.45
	45-54	41	4.15
Available Elsewhere at lower price	15-24	29	3.31
	45-54	41	2.85
Won't match existing outfit	15-24	29	2.69
	45-54	41	3.49
Not sure when to wear it	15-24	29	3.41
	45-54	40	3.15
Difficult to wash or iron	15-24	29	2.86
	45-54	41	3.66

Source: SPSS outputs

### The Internet shopper

While research establishes the profile (characteristics) of the Internet user, no formal research explores the Internet shopper (Donthu and Garcia, 1999). As a result, there is no evidence suggesting that the typical Internet user is or is not, also the typical Internet shopper. However, investigation into the profile of the Internet shopper may have considerable importance in consumer behaviour and other domains (e.g. segmentation). Given the fact that 95.5% of the respondents in this research shop on the Internet, it is imperative to establish an initial understanding of their demographic characteristics.

Cross-tabulations (tables 7.14 and 7.15) indicate that 86% of Internet shoppers are females aged between 25 and 44 ( $n=536$ ). In terms of education, 58% have either a college or a university level degree. The fact that females exceed males was anticipated however, proportionally, males seem to outrank females in Internet shopping since 87.5% of the non-Internet shoppers are females ( $n=536$ ). This may be an indication as to the gender of non-Internet shoppers, although additional research is required to establish certainty.

Further, cross-tabulation statistics (Pearson chi-square=16.580,  $df=4$ ,  $p=.002$ ) indicate an association between Internet shopping and gender. However, there is no association between Internet shopping and education (Pearson chi-square=4.316,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.229$ ).

**Table 7.14 Internet shopping\* Gender cross-tabulation**

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Internet shopping	Yes	Count	73	439	512
		% within Internet shopping	14.3%	85.7%	100.0%
	No	Count	3	21	24
		% within Internet shopping	12.5%	87.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	76	460	536
		% within Internet shopping	14.2%	85.8%	100.0%

Source: SPSS output

**Table 7.15 Internet shopping \*Age cross-tabulation**

			Age					Total
			over 55	45-54	35-44	25-34	15-24	
Internet shopping	yes	Count	7	38	206	239	24	514
		% within Internet shopping	1.4%	7.4%	40.1%	46.5%	4.7%	100.0%
	no	Count		4	4	12	5	25
		% within Internet shopping		16.0%	16.0%	48.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	7	42	210	251	29	539
		% within Internet shopping	1.3%	7.8%	39.0%	46.6%	5.4%	100.0%

Source: SPSS output

A series of independent sample t-tests were conducted in an attempt to establish the differences between Internet and non-Internet shoppers, in terms of frequency of clothes shopping, budget spent on clothes, factors considered when shopping and perceived risk. Examination of frequency of clothes shopping and budget spent on clothes show no significant differences between Internet shoppers and non-shoppers. However, differences were observed for price as a factor considered when shopping.

It appears that price is more important<sup>41</sup> to non-Internet shoppers than Internet shoppers (tables 7.16 and 7.17). Similar results were reported by Donthu and Garcia (1999) where non-Internet shoppers were found to be more price conscious. This seems to contradict literature that suggests price comparisons are likely to make the Internet shopper price conscious (e.g. Quelch and Klein, 1996).

Internet shoppers and non-shoppers were also compared in terms of the amount of risk perceived in shopping for clothes (tables 7.18 and 7.19). Similarities were observed in the amount of attention to detail, time spent deciding and confidence in judging garment quality. On the other hand, significant differences were observed in terms of social risk where non-Internet shoppers seem to care more about what family and friends like. Similarly, Internet shoppers differ from non-shoppers significantly on four risk dimensions. In comparison to Internet shoppers, non-shoppers appear to be more concerned about,

1. the fitting of the garment after the first wash
2. finding the garment at a lower price elsewhere
3. matching the garment with an existing outfit
4. the care of the garment in terms of washing and ironing

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<sup>41</sup> Items are measured on a scale of 1-5 (important-unimportant).

**Tables 7.16 and 7.17 Examination of differences between Internet and non-shoppers in terms of the factors considered important when shopping for clothes (tests and statistics)**

Independent Samples Test		
	t-test for Equality of Means	
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
price	1.854	.064
quality	.483	.629
fabric	.511	.609
style	1.348	.178
brand	-1.063	.288
care	-.236	.813
fit	.330	.742
fashionability	1.326	.185
colour	-1.051	.294

		Group Statistics	
		Internet use for shopping	Statistics
		N	Mean
price	yes	529	2.17
	no	25	1.76
quality	yes	529	1.58
	no	25	1.48
fabric	yes	530	1.95
	no	25	1.84
style	yes	528	1.75
	no	24	1.46
brand	yes	526	3.17
	no	24	3.42
care	yes	525	2.71
	no	25	2.76
fit	yes	528	1.43
	no	25	1.36
fashionability	yes	526	2.40
	no	25	2.12
colour	yes	517	1.97
	no	25	2.20

**Table 7.18 and 7.19 Examination of differences between Internet shoppers and non-shoppers in terms of perceived risk (tests and statistics)**

Independent Samples Test		
	t-test for Equality of Means	
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Attention to detail	.660	.510
Time spend deciding	-1.125	.261
Confident about judging	-.801	.424
Social risk	-3.087	.002
Get it cheaper in sales	-.770	.441
Garment might be of poor	.983	.326
Fabric might cause	-.538	.591
Will it fit after first wash	2.793	.005
Available Elsewhere at	1.928	.054
Won't match existing outfi	2.856	.004
Not sure when to wear it	1.265	.206
Difficult to wash or iron	1.862	.063

		Group Statistics	
		Internet use for shopping	Statistics
		N	Mean
Attention to detail	yes	531	2.69
	no	25	2.52
Time spend deciding	yes	531	3.33
	no	25	3.60
Confident about judging	yes	531	1.79
garment quality	no	25	1.92
Social risk	yes	531	2.02
	no	25	2.76
Get it cheaper in sales	yes	526	2.95
	no	25	3.16
Garment might be of poor	yes	524	4.15
quality	no	25	3.96
Fabric might cause	yes	512	2.40
allergies	no	25	2.56
Will it fit after first wash	yes	522	3.79
	no	25	3.12
Available Elsewhere at	yes	526	2.90
lower price	no	25	2.40
Won't match existing out	yes	522	2.99
	no	24	2.25
Not sure when to wear it	yes	516	3.24
	no	25	2.92
Difficult to wash or iron	yes	525	3.27
	no	25	2.80

Source: SPSS outputs

Further, given the large number of items involved in the questionnaire, it was considered important to summarise the data before the testing of the conceptual framework, using factor analysis. This type of analysis is also useful in exploring the nature of various constructs (in terms of single or multiple dimensions) including optimal stimulation level, involvement and perceived risk, and for investigating potential relationships among them.

### 7.2 Reduction of the data

Following the preliminary description of the sample the next stage of the analysis involves reduction of the data. Because of the large number of items used in the research questionnaire (e.g. the optimal stimulation scale) data reduction is important before the analysis. To address this, factor analysis is considered appropriate since its objective is in fact the summarisation of a set of variables into a smaller synthetic set (factors) expressing what is common among the original variables (Tull and Hawkins, 1993). There are several methods of factor analysis however they are all concerned with determining the relationships among a set of variables. In the context of this research exploratory factor analysis is used to explain the possible relationships within variables in the OSL, product and channel categories.

#### 7.2.1 Optimal stimulation level

Optimal stimulation level (OSL) is measured by a set of 29 Likert-type statements on bi-polar scales of 1 to 5 (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Prior to subjecting the scale to the summarisation procedure it is imperative to determine its internal

consistency by evaluating its reliability. This is because the items composing the optimal stimulation scale derive from a uni-dimensional measure where its items are summed to indicate an overall index of optimal stimulation level. For this reason reliability analysis is conducted before factor analysis.

Being the most frequently investigated property of research measures (Churchill, 1999), reliability refers to the determination of the consistency of independent or comparable measures of a sample. A number of procedures may be followed to establish the reliability of measures. There is the procedure known as 'test-retest' where the same sample is measured at two different points in time. The scores obtained on both occasions are then examined for association. In the case where they fail to correlate perfectly there is indication of random error in the measurement. Alternatively, the 'split-half' procedure, which has been criticised for its arbitrary method on the division of the items (Churchill, 1999), is concerned with the correlation of the scores of two separate sets of items to establish the reliability of a given instrument.

However, to establish the internal homogeneity of the OSL scale, the method of Cronbach's coefficient alpha was utilised because it is particularly favoured and generally accepted in marketing research (Peter, 1979; Bloch 1981; Churchill, 1999). The coefficient alpha provides a summary measure of the inter-correlations among a set of items and it is routinely calculated to assess the quality of a measure (Churchill, 1999). Alpha tends to be large when scales are highly inter-correlated and thus appear



to capture the same construct. An acceptable level of internal consistency ranges between .50 and .60 (Nunnally 1967).

The procedure followed for the assessment of the OSL reliability involves the examination of the overall 29 items in terms of their homogeneity and consistency in measuring OSL. The initial assessment of the 29 OSL items, which can be used as an overall index to assess a single trait, indicates a coefficient alpha of .73. However, 11 items exhibit higher alpha values in comparison to the coefficient alpha. The items are eliminated and the coefficient alpha increases to .81. Additional examination of the scale establishes the extent to which each item shares equally in the common core, in other words whether it contributes equally to the measuring of the OSL. This is achieved by calculating the items' correlations with the total OSL score, in this case the overall mean value. Indeed the correlations confirm that the 11 eliminated items have the lowest correlations ranging from -.049 to .361. The remaining 18 items may be combined (e.g. sum or average) to produce an overall score of the OSL which indicates the degree of variety seeking propensity among respondents.

To investigate the dimensionality of OSL, the items are subjected to 'principal components' factor analysis. In comparison to other techniques (e.g. generalised least squares etc.), principal components is the most commonly used analysis (Tull and Hawkins, 1993) which transforms a set of inter-related variables to a set of unrelated linear combinations. It yields up to one factor for each variable in a descending order of the proportion of the variance explained by the factor.

The final solution of the OSL factor analysis indicates four factors ( $n=557$ ) explaining 59% of variance. Although principal components analysis provides a useful tool for summarising data, from an interpretative point of view rotation of the factors appears to be fairly common in marketing research. Rotation concerns the moving of axes to form linear combinations of the factors with the primary objective to improve the fit of the solution, in other words to enhance the interpretation of the factors. A number of rotation schemes are available including orthogonal and oblique. Unlike oblique rotation, orthogonal rotation ensures the independence of the factors by preserving the right angles among the factor axes.

The OSL factors have been rotated using the Varimax orthogonal rotation, which appears to be the most popular scheme in marketing research because it achieves maximum interpretative ability (Tull and Hawkins, 1993; Churchill, 1999). The rotation in the final solution is achieved in 6 iterations and the loadings of 12 variables identify four distinct and fairly interpretable factors (table 7.20). The variables of each of the four factors are subsequently assessed for reliability where alpha values of .73, .62, .56 and .51 were reported for the factors.

**Table 7.20 Rotated component matrix of optimal stimulation level**

	Factors			
	1	2	3	4
osl5: When things get boring I look for new and unfamiliar experiences	.764			
osl1: I actively seek new ideas and experiences	.688			
osl18: I like novelty and change in my daily routine	.647			
osl24: I like meeting people who give me new ideas	.645			
osl21: I like to go somewhere different nearly every day	.533			
osl16: As a child, I often imagined exploring the world	.533			
osl11: I prefer friends who are reliable and predictable		.852		
osl19: I am happiest when I feel safe and secure		.780		
osl9: I sometimes like to do things that are a little frightening			.769	
osl29: I would not enjoy risky sports such as mountain climbing or sky diving			.768	
osl28: I avoid busy, noisy places				.820
osl22: I do not like to have lots of activity around me				.747

Source: SPSS output

In interpreting the four factors it is important to consider the findings of Mehrabian and Russell (1974) in examining the original OSL scale (Arousal-Seeking-Tendency) discussed in chapter 6 (page 145). Their factor solution indicated five dimensions which are said to correspond to five sources of arousal<sup>42</sup>, including change, unusual stimuli, risk, sensuality, and new environments.

A similar interpretation in terms of arousal sources is pursued for the present four-factor OSL structure. As already discussed in chapter 2, environmental stimulation is determined by certain properties or sources. Individuals with high OSLs will willingly attempt to increase their environmental stimulation (if this is lower than optimal) by engaging into complex, uncertain or even risky situations. Each of the four factors identified reflects a distinct source of stimulation consistent with Mehrabian and Russell (1974).

In examining the 6 items composing the first OSL factor it is evident that all items refer to situations characterised by novelty and unfamiliarity for example, 'I actively seek new ideas and experiences' and 'I like to go somewhere different nearly every day'. The items reflect the individual's attempt to derive stimulation from new experiences, ideas or situations. In addition, a consistency (over time) towards the seeking for novelty is almost reflected for example through the statement 'When things get boring I look for new and unfamiliar experiences'. Given this interpretation, a suitable name for this factor is probably, new and unfamiliar stimuli and which corresponds with the 'unusual stimuli' of Mehrabian and Russell.

Individuals often derive stimulation from changes in their environments or those with low OSLs are often seen to avoid any sort of change. Change in one's environment reflects alteration or modification of the aspects of life that one is accustomed to. It is often associated with things that are unpredicted, unplanned or unreliable, sometimes affecting the feeling of security and safety. Change in this context may be often pursued as a means (or source) of enhancing environmental stimulation. The second factor of the OSL structure, which corresponds to Mehrabian and Russell's 'arousal from change' is reflected through statements like 'I prefer friends who are reliable and predictable' and 'I am happiest when I feel safe and secure'. Given this interpretation an appropriate name for this factor would be change stimuli characterised by predictability and the expected.

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<sup>42</sup> The authors fail to state which items correspond to the five dimensions.

Alternatively, individuals often attempt to increase their stimulation by placing themselves in situations characterised by risk. A common example of risk situations is in sports particularly for activities such as mountain climbing or skydiving. However, risk-taking as a source of stimulation can be applied in all aspects of an individual's life including job choices. Risk taking behaviour is emphasised by the third OSL factor which is termed risk stimuli. Risk stimuli is identified by three items and corresponds with the 'arousal from risk' dimension of Mehrabian and Russell originally composed by 9 items.

Lastly, an increase or decrease in the level of stimulation may be determined by the activity and variety which characterise an individual's external environment. In particular, individuals with high OSLs are more likely to visit popular (i.e. crowded) places and more willing to experiment with different tastes than low OSL individuals. In this context individuals' activities, whether social or otherwise, are seen as the source for deriving stimulation. This is reflected by the fourth OSL factor named activity stimuli with statements like 'I avoid busy, noisy places' and 'I do not like to have lots of activity around me'. The 'activity stimuli' seems to be consistent with the interpretation of Mehrabian and Russell with regard to arousal from new environments.

**Table 7.21 Items measuring the four dimensions of optimal stimulation level**

**New and unfamiliar stimuli**

1. When things get boring I look for new and unfamiliar experiences.
2. I actively seek new ideas and experiences.
3. I like novelty and change in my daily routine.
4. I like meeting people who give me new ideas.
5. I like to go somewhere different nearly every day.
6. As a child I often imagined exploring the world

**Change stimuli**

1. I prefer people who are reliable and predictable.
2. I am happiest when I feel safe and secure.

**Risk stimuli**

1. I sometimes like to do things that are a little frightening.
2. I would not enjoy risky sports such as mountain climbing or sky diving.

**Activity stimuli**

1. I avoid busy, noisy places.
2. I do not like to have lots of activity around me.

**7.2.2 Product and channel characteristics**

Factor analysis as a mean of reducing data and exploring relationships is particularly appropriate for examining some of the product and channel variables of the conceptual framework for a number of reasons (noted earlier). It is emphasised that, the complexity in the conceptualisation and measurement of these variables has encouraged the use of multiple items for their operationalisation (e.g. scales). While this may improve (to some extent) the face-validity of the measures it creates a problem in terms of the large amount of information involved. In addition, most of the variables are conceptualised as multi-dimensional (e.g. involvement, perceived risk etc.). This highlights the need to explore their dimensionality in the context of

this research. Finally, the conceptual framework raises the issue of inter-relationships of product and channel variables, which have hardly been explored in the literature (e.g. involvement with product risk, channel risk channel loyalty etc.).

Principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation has been used for exploring product and channel variables. The following section deals with the description of those product and channel characteristics that were factor-analysed, including involvement in clothes, perceived product and channel risk and lastly similarity in clothes. For the remaining variables of channel decision involvement, brand and channel loyalty, channel similarity, channel enjoyment and brand switching data reduction does not represent an issue. As discussed in chapter 6, single measures have been used for capturing these variables (with the exception of brand loyalty and brand switching). The measures used to capture these variables have been already discussed and argued in chapter 6 (page 136).

#### 7.2.2.1 Involvement in clothing

Involvement with clothes is measured by a scale of 15 items ranging from 1-5 (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Unlike the optimal stimulation level scale, which originates from a single source, the involvement scale is a collection of items derived from various sources combined together for the purpose of this research. The scale was intended to capture five dimensions of involvement (e.g. importance, pleasure, interest, self-expression and sign value). In addressing the dimensionality and consistency of the scale a series of factor and reliability analyses have been

conducted. Final results report a 2-factor solution capturing 60% of the explained variance. The factors are identified by 9 items<sup>43</sup> with fairly distinct and interpretable loadings (table 7.22). Reliability analysis of the items composing each factor indicates alpha values of .80 for factor 1 and .79 for factor 2. The item loadings appear to be distinct in identifying two factors, however two variables (pleasure) appear to have significant loadings on both factors. In particular loadings of .40 indicate that pleasure accounts for 16% of the variation in factor 1. This may complicate the interpretation of the factors since the pleasure items seem to be related to the variables loading on first factor and second factor.

**Table 7.22 Rotated component matrix of involvement with clothes (Varimax rotation)**

	Factor	
	1	2
Importance- Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me (3)	.789	
Importance- I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me (5)	.755	
Importance- I attached great importance to the way other people are dressed (7)	.752	
Self-expression- Clothes help me express me who I am (6)	.736	
Interest- Clothing is a topic which I am indifferent (11)		.803
Interest- I am not at all interested in clothes (15)		.720
Self-expression- Clothing is not part of myself image (12)		.692
Pleasure- It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes (1)	.403	.644
Pleasure- I enjoy buying clothes for myself (4)	.449	.628

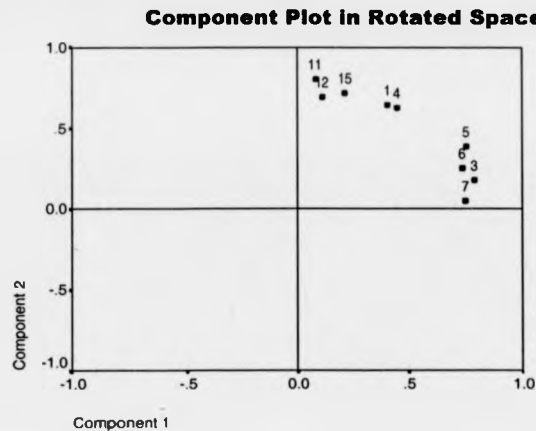
Source: SPSS output

This is also evident by plotting the variables on the rotated component space (figure 7.1). A possible explanation of this may be the fact that rotation of the factors was achieved in 3 iterations, which limits their isolation.

<sup>43</sup> Reversed items have been re-coded so as all items indicate 1 as high involvement and 5 as low involvement.



**Figure 7.1 Involvement variables plotted in rotated space (Varimax rotation)**



Source: SPSS output (the numbers correspond to the items cited in table 7.22)

A way to clarify this situation is to eliminate the two pleasure variables and derive a new factor solution with the remaining variables. An alternative is to consider a new solution yet, using oblique rotation to allow for factor inter-correlation. Indeed, oblique rotation seems to provide more interpretable loadings of the pleasure variables (table 7.23).

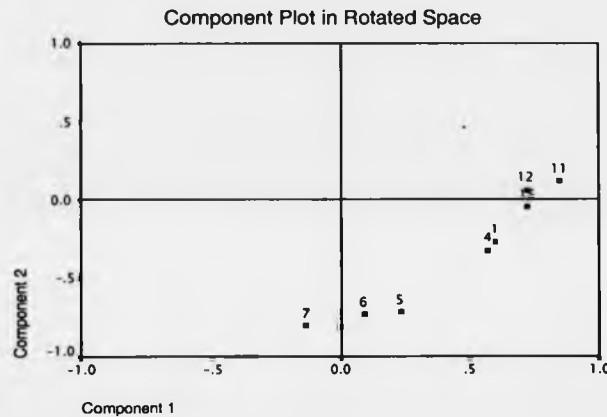
**Table 7.23 Pattern matrix of involvement with clothes (oblique rotation)**

	Factor	
	1	2
Interest- Clothing is a topic which I am indifferent (11)	.854	
Interest- I am not at all interested in clothes (15)	.730	
Self-expression- Clothing is not part of my self image (12)	.726	
Pleasure- It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes (1)	.599	
Pleasure- I enjoy buying clothes for my self (4)	.570	
Importance- Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me (3)		-.811
Importance- I attach great importance to the way people are dressed (7)		-.803
Self-expression- Clothes help me express who I am (6)		-.734
Importance- I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me (5)		-.719

Source: SPSS output

Reliability analysis indicates alpha values of .79 for factor 1 and .80 for factor 2. The amount of variance explained by the factors remains as previously (60%). In addition, the component plot confirms that the oblique rotation offers a better interpretation (figure 7.2).

**Figure 7.2 Involvement variables plotted in rotated space (oblique rotation)**



Source: SPSS output (the numbers correspond to the items cited in table 7.23)

The variables identify two dimensions of involvement. The first dimension involves the interest of the respondents in clothing, identified by 5 variables (table 7.23). Their interest (or non-interest) seems to derive from what clothing means to them. In other words, respondents are interested in clothes because it helps them to express themselves and gives them pleasure. This highlights the experiential aspect of clothing as a product class and confirms that hedonism is closely related to the involvement concept as theorised in the literature (e.g. Kapferer and Laurent, 1985b;

Rodgers and Schneider, 1993). Although hypothesised as individual dimensions of involvement, the fact that interest and pleasure merge together, is consistent with Roger and Schneider (1993). The authors suggest that is antithetical to be interested in a product unless the product is inherently pleasurable.

The second factor highlights the importance of clothes to the individual. Importance was the first concept to be used in the literature to explain involvement (Howard and Sheth, 1969; Hupfer and Gardner, 1971; Lastovicka and Gardner, 1979; Bloch and Richins, 1983) and is commonly used as one of its measures. In particular, Bloch and Richins (1983) argue that a variety of terms have been used to refer to product importance including among others product involvement. The authors define enduring importance as

*"A long-term, cross-situational perception of product importance based on the strength of the product's relationship to central needs and values" (p72).*

Based on the review of the involvement literature (see chapter 3, page 54) this definition highlights that importance is often viewed as synonymous to involvement.

In the context of this research, importance is identified by 4 variables which reflect the relationship of clothing with the individual's values, opinions or needs (e.g. 'because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me'). The strength of this relationship indicates the extent to which the individual is

involved with clothing. In addition, importance seems to emphasise that involvement with clothing is rather enduring in nature.

#### 7.2.2.2 Perceived risk in clothes

A number of items were used to measure the two dimensions of perceived product risk (uncertainty and consequences). Three items capturing two risk-related variables (information seeking and self-confidence) were used to infer the uncertainty dimension. To measure the consequence dimension 4 measures consisting of 18 items were used and subjected to factor and reliability analyses to identify the various types of perceived risk in clothing. The final solution of 9 items produces 4 factors capturing 75% of the explained variance. Reliability analysis of each factor indicates alpha values of .73, .80, .70 and .57 for each factor (in an ascending order-table 7.24).

Examination of the rotated matrix (table 7.24) indicates rather distinct and interpretable loadings, identifying four types of perceived risk in clothing. In particular, the first dimension corresponds to the risk associated with the performance of the garment. In buying their clothes respondents seems to be concerned with the risk associated with the stitching, fabric and washability of garment.

In addition, the second dimension concerns the risk with regard to the fit of a garment. This type of risk is associated with the way a clothing garment looks on the individual in terms of size and fit. This is undoubtedly a major concern when buying clothes and for this reason individuals usually prefer to try on clothes prior to finalising their decision of whether to buy or not.

**Table 7.24 Rotated component matrix of perceived risk in clothes**

	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
Stitching	.826			
Washability	.798			
Fabric	.762			
Size		.909		
Fit		.892		
Get it cheaper in sales			.907	
Available elsewhere at lower price			.816	
Won't match existing outfit				.844
Not sure when to wear it				.803

Source: SPSS output

An equally significant type of risk is related to the price of the garment. Individuals are often concerned with finding the best possible price available and in order to do so they may choose to shop around or shop during sale events.

Finally, clothing appears to be (to some people) a very 'emotional' product in the sense that it may evoke positive or negative feelings. Literature has associated clothing with psychological risk (e.g. Havlena and DeSarlo, 1974), which is captured by the last factor. In this context, psychological risk is associated with the concern of the individual as to whether the garment matches an existing outfit.

#### 7.2.2.3 Perceived risk in channels

Perceived risk in channels was captured by four measures of the uncertainty and consequences dimensions. In measuring product risk the uncertainty dimension was inferred by the use of indicators however, this did not seem appropriate in the context of the channel due to the limitations on its conceptual background.

In addition two possible consequences were captured, that of poor decision and financial loss (in terms of credit card fraud), while a third measure was used to capture risk of general defraud in channels. The 18 items were subjected to factor and reliability analyses.

The decision to utilise factor analysis was necessary to address the inter-relationship of perceived risk across the three channels. Results indicate a 5-factor solution capturing 75% of the explained variance. The factors are identified by 12 items with distinct and interpretable loadings (table 7.25). Reliability analysis indicated sufficient coefficient alpha values of .74, .85, .80, .69 and .67 for each factor in an ascending order as presented in the rotated matrix.

**Table 7.25 Rotated component matrix of channel risk**

	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
COC-R- price	.832				
COC-R- range of products	.801				
COC-R- product quality	.703				
COC-R- customer service	.642				
COC-C- product quality		.927			
COC-I- product quality		.886			
Possibility of buying something of poor quality from catalogues			.913		
Possibility of buying something of poor quality from the Internet			.891		
Risk of defraud retail store				.886	
Risk of defraud catalogue				.863	
COC-I- range of products					.877
COC-I -price					.818

(COC= Certainty choice outcome in channels, R= retail store, C= catalogue, I= Internet)

Source: SPSS output

In interpreting the factors, the first corresponds to the risk perceived by the respondents in their choice of retail store, termed store risk. In this context, respondents appear to be very certain about the outcome of their choice in terms of product range, price, customer service and product quality. This is explained by the fact that individuals have a wide experience in shopping from retail stores (compared to other channels) and as a result they have developed a confidence in their judgement and choices. This confidence is further reinforced every time individuals shop from retail stores.

Further, the second dimension refers to the risk perceived by the respondents in terms of product quality in a non-store context (catalogue and Internet), termed non-store product quality uncertainty. Most respondents report that they are certain about the outcome of their choice, in terms of product quality in both catalogue and Internet shopping, however one third of them appears to be undecided or neutral. This may be because of the inability to personally inspect the products, which seems to influence their evaluation of risk. Alternatively, because product quality is an inherent product attribute, it may be argued that respondents cannot judge the outcome of their choice in terms of product quality because quality varies from product to product or brand to brand.

However, respondents report that they are concerned about the possibility of making a poor decision (in terms of overall quality) when shopping for clothes using the Internet or a catalogue. This indicates that despite the product or brand involved,

respondents are likely to be concerned about the possibility of making a poor decision in terms of quality. This type of risk is captured by the fourth dimension and termed non-store quality risk.

In addition, more than 50% of the respondents report that shopping for clothes from a retail store or a catalogue involves low risk in terms of being defrauded in a general sense. This type of risk termed defraud risk appears to be relevant only for store and catalogue. This may indicate that respondents perceived this kind of risk as being very unimportant in both retail store and catalogue shopping.

Lastly, the sixth dimension of perceived risk in Internet shopping highlights the uncertainty of the outcome of the choice in terms of the range of products and prices. More than 50% of the respondents report that they are very certain about the outcome of the choice in this context. This may be explained by the fact that the respondents have prior experience with Internet shopping as such they are confident about the outcome of their choice. In addition, individuals shopping on the Internet have access to large amounts of information with regard to prices and products, which further strengthens their confidence and choice. Given this interpretation, this factor is termed Internet risk of range of products and price.

#### 7.2.2.4 Brand similarity in clothes

Respondents were asked to rate similarity in clothes in terms of 10 characteristics (see chapter 6, page 176) using itemised rating scales. The measure was designed to be



unidimensional and therefore the scale was subjected to reliability analysis to assess its internal consistency. Of the 10 items composing the scale, 2 were eliminated. Final results indicate a coefficient alpha value of .85 (table 7.26). An overall score of the similarity of brands in clothes may be obtained by averaging the 8 items.

**Table 7.26 Brand similarity in clothes**

R E L I A B I L I T Y   A N A L Y S I S   +   S C A L E   ( A L P H A )					
Item-total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Alpha if Item Deleted
PRICE	18.2000	27.8867	.4762	.2979	.8535
STITCHING	18.4615	25.7981	.7148	.6144	.8261
FABRIC	18.2904	27.0928	.5993	.4066	.8396
STYLE	18.2308	26.5671	.5886	.4326	.8407
IMAGE	17.9827	26.4448	.6085	.4254	.8383
FIT	18.3462	26.2730	.5833	.3810	.8417
QUALITY	18.5865	26.1274	.6449	.5768	.8340
FASHIONABILITY	18.5519	27.0802	.5898	.4555	.8406
Reliability Coefficients      8 items					
Alpha = .8566      Standardized item alpha = .8572					

Source: SPSS output

The discussion of the similarity in clothes completes the section of data reduction. The following section focuses on the discussion of the investigation of association among the variables. However, before progressing to this stage of the analysis, it was considered important to investigate brand switching in clothes.

**Table 7.27 Summary of measures**

MEASURE	TECHNIQUES	RESULTS	NEW VARIABLES
<b>OSL</b>	Factor analysis Reliability analysis	4 factors, 59% variance Alpha .73, .62, .56, .51	1. New/unfamiliar stimuli 2. Change stimuli 3. Risk stimuli 4. Activity stimuli
<b>PRODUCT</b>			
Involvement with clothes	Factor analysis Reliability analysis	2 factors 65% variance Alpha .80, .72	1. Importance 2. Indifference
Perceived risk in clothes (Consequence dimension)	Factor analysis Reliability analysis	4 factors 75% variance Alpha .73, .80, .70, .57	3. Performance risk 4. Appearance risk 5. Price risk 6. Psychological risk 7. Uncertainty
(Uncertainty dimension)	Correlations Mean (3 items)	Indicative of relationship	
Similarity in clothes	Reliability analysis	Alpha .85	8. Similarity in clothes
Brand loyalty (Preference and behaviour)	Correlations Mean (2 items)	Indicative of relationship	9. Brand loyalty
<b>CHANNEL</b>			
Perceived risk in channels	Factor analysis Reliability analysis	5 factors 75% variance Alpha .74, .85, .80, .69, .67	1. Store risk 2. Non-store product quality uncertainty 3. Non-store quality risk 4. Defraud risk 5. Internet risk (price, product) 6. Channel decision involvement 7. Channel loyalty
Channel decision involvement	Single measure		
Channel loyalty	Single measure		
Similarity in channels	Reliability analysis Mean (2 items)	Alpha .75	8. Channel similarity
Enjoyment in channels	Reliability analysis 3 individual items	Alpha poor .47	9. Enjoyment in retail store shopping 10. Enjoyment in catalogue shopping 11. Enjoyment in Internet shopping
<b>OTHER MEASURES</b>			
Self-confidence	Reliability analysis Mean (2 items)	Alpha .64	
Information seeking	Reliability analysis Mean (2 items)	Alpha .87	

### 7.3 Brand switching in clothes

The intention from the beginning was to capture the propensity to switch brands in clothes using a number of indicators some of which have been previously used in the literature for other product categories. These were the frequency of clothes shopping, the amount spent on clothes and the size of the evoked set (i.e the number of alternative brands considered each time in shopping trips).

Ideally, frequency would indicate that the more you shop the more likely you are to consider more alternatives which indicates a propensity to switch. Similarly, the more money you spent on clothes the more likely to consider more brands and therefore switch. While these might have been fairly adequate indicators of brand switching in other product categories it appears after a series of preliminary t-tests that frequency and budget alone can not really assist in capturing switching in clothes. Consumers do not seem to switch brands of clothes in the same manner as they do in other product classes. It appears that switching behaviour in clothing is more complicated than previously thought. Results show that there is no significant differences, in terms of the number of alternatives considered<sup>44</sup>, between those who shop less frequently (tables 7.28 and 7.29) and those who more frequently. Similarly, no differences were observed in the number of alternatives for those who spend less (tables 7.30 and 7.31) and those who spend more.

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<sup>44</sup>Number of alternatives are measured on a scale of 1-4 (only 1-more than 5).

**Tables 7.28 and 7.29 Independent sample t-tests and group statistics (number of alternatives-frequency of clothes shopping)**

	t-test for Equality of Means	
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Number of alternatives considered	-1.469	.143

Frequency of clothes		N	Mean
Number of alternatives considered	Twice a year or less	30	2.5000
	More than once a month	238	2.7353

**Tables 7.30 and 7.31 Independent sample t-tests and group statistics (number of alternatives-budget spent on clothes)**

	t-test for Equality of Means	
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Number of alternative considered	-1.714	.089

Annual budget spent on clothes		Statistics	
		N	Mean
Number of alternative considered	Less than 500 pounds	110	2.5182
	Over 2000 pounds	51	2.7647

Source: SPSS outputs

In addition to frequency and budget, a number of other variables have been utilised to assist in exploring brand switching in clothes. Initially, an item was utilised in relation to frequency (times bought favourite brand/frequency of buying clothes) to indicate whether respondents bought their favourite brand every time they shop for clothes. Frequency distribution shows that 82.2% of respondents (n=338) buy their favourite brand each time they shop for clothes. The question to ask is, why almost 50% of the respondents (n=555) consider more than four brands every time they shop for clothes since they end up buying their favourite brand at least 80% of the times? The answer may be twofold.

First of all, there is the possibility that the respondents engage in an 'artificial' evaluation of alternatives in order to reinforce their choice of the favourite brand (e.g. persuade themselves that they are making the right choice). Secondly, they consider more alternatives because they in fact buy (or at least consider to buy) other brands, in addition to their favourite, each time they shop for clothes. Cross-tabulation statistics indicate that 53% of those that bought their favourite brand each time they went shopping (n=276) are happy to choose another brand if their preferred brand is not available (table 7.32). On the contrary, only 20% of respondents stated that they would commit to their brand. In addition chi-square tests report no association between the two variables (Pearson chi-square= 18.133, df=14, p=.201). Indeed, this reinforces the idea that respondents may not be loyal to a single brand of clothes but rather, that they have a portfolio of brands they buy depending on their preference at the time. Given this, it is imperative to examine the factors that determine the respondents' choice when they buy clothes.

Respondents were asked to indicate the degree of importance of 9 clothes characteristics<sup>45</sup> on a scale of 1 to 5 (important-unimportant). A series of t-tests were calculated using commitment as a separating variable for the factors considered important when shopping for clothes. Results showed no significant differences between the two groups (committed-uncommitted), except for the characteristic of 'brand'. In particular, the 'brand' is more important to the committed group in comparison to the uncommitted (tables 7.33 and 7.34).

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<sup>45</sup> Price, material (fabric), brand, fit, colour, quality, style, care instructions and fashionability, measured on a scale of 1-5 (1=important, 5=unimportant) .

Further, the importance scale was subjected to a reliability analysis (alpha) with 3 items (quality, style and fit) remaining and an alpha value of .93. This highlights the fact that in shopping for clothes respondents are more concerned about the fit, quality and style of the garment than any of the other characteristics. In fact, frequency distributions show that among the other characteristics brand is the least important attribute when shopping for clothes. Subsequently, this may explain why consumers consider a lot of alternative brands when shopping.

**Table 7.32 Times bought favourite brand\*Commitment cross-tabulation**

			Choose another brand if preferred brand is not available			Total
			agree	neutral	disagree	
Percentage of times bought favourite brand when shopping for clothes	33.33	Count	1			1
		%	100.0%			100.0%
	40.00	Count	1	1	2	4
		%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	50.00	Count	2	1	1	4
		%	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%	100.0%
	60.00	Count	12	3	1	16
		%	75.0%	18.8%	6.3%	100.0%
	66.67	Count	1	2		3
		%	33.3%	66.7%		100.0%
	75.00	Count	11	3	1	15
		%	73.3%	20.0%	6.7%	100.0%
	80.00	Count	14	3		17
		%	82.4%	17.6%		100.0%
	100.00	Count	146	75	55	276
		%	52.9%	27.2%	19.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	188	88	60	336
		%	56.0%	26.2%	17.9%	100.0%

Source: SPSS output

**Tables 7.33 and 7.34 Independent sample t-tests and group statistics (factors considered important when shopping-commitment)**

	t-test for Equality of Means	
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Price	-1.253	.211
Quality	-.080	.936
Fabric	.308	.758
Style	-.162	.871
Brand	3.860	.000
Care	1.235	.217
Fit	-1.481	.139
Fashionability	1.157	.248
Colour	-1.389	.165

Source: SPSS outputs

		Statistics	
		N	Mean
Price	agree	353	2.09
	disagree	76	2.26
Quality	agree	351	1.56
	disagree	76	1.57
Fabric	agree	353	1.96
	disagree	75	1.92
Style	agree	349	1.72
	disagree	76	1.74
Brand	agree	348	2.91
	disagree	75	2.36
Care	agree	349	2.75
	disagree	75	2.57
Fit	agree	352	1.36
	disagree	76	1.55
Fashionability	agree	351	2.37
	disagree	76	2.22
Colour	agree	345	1.95
	disagree	75	2.13

Given this discussion, the understanding of brand switching in clothes focuses on the idea that respondents have a set of alternative brands which they buy frequently. Of these brands there is one that they buy the most and it appears to be their favourite because of fit, style and quality. Respondents have a strong preference for their favourite brand, but at the same time because brand name is not important to them they are happy to alternate if they cannot find a 'perfect' combination of fit, style and quality in their favourite (or most preferred) brand. If respondents found what they wanted in their favourite brand they would buy that brand on any given occasion, and thus they would not alternate.

To sum up, respondents exhibit a loyalty to their favourite brand, in terms of their strong preference and the times they buy it, however they tend to be uncommitted to it

(e.g. switch). Brand switching is triggered by the fact that the loyalty they exhibit for the favourite brand has nothing to do with the actual brand name, but with other attributes which can also be found in other brands. As a result there is no commitment to that brand.

Based on this, the degree of brand importance and commitment to the favourite brand would ideally indicate the extent of the propensity to switch and therefore a combination of them is utilised as a measure in the context of this research.

#### 7.4 Investigation of association

In conceptualising channel characteristics (see chapter 5, page 116) a number of hypotheses have been developed with regard to the relationships among the channel variables (table 7.35). Because of the limitations in the literature, such investigation is essential in that it assists in understanding the nature of channel characteristics. This is carried out through the use of correlation analysis (Pearson correlation coefficients) which involves measuring the closeness of a relationship between two or more variables (Churchill, 1999).



**Table 7.35 Hypotheses**

H1	There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and perceived channel risk
H2	There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and information seeking in channels
H3	There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and channel similarity
H4	There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and enjoyment in channels
H5	There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and channel loyalty
H6	There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and information seeking in channels
H7	There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and self-confidence in channels
H8	There is a relationship between self-confidence in channels and information seeking in channels
H9	There is a relationship between channel loyalty and brand switching
H10	There is a relationship between channel similarity and information seeking in channels
H11	There is a relationship between channel characteristics and brand switching

**1. There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and perceived channel risk.**

In a channel context, perceived risk was hypothesised as an antecedent of channel decision involvement. In particular, an individual would become involved with the channel decision in a situation where he or she would perceive risk associated with the channel. The two variables appear not to be related (table 7.42) and the explanation is that 76% of respondents are either unconcerned or neutral with the channel decision.

However, at the same time, they report that they are concerned about channel risk. The risk that the respondents perceive in channel choices does not seem to motivate them to become involved with the channel decision, as such the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypotheses 2, 3 and 10, previously considered as distinct, appear to be related, thus they will be examined simultaneously.

**2. There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and information seeking in channels.**

**3. There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and channel similarity.**

**10. There is a relationship between channel similarity and information seeking in channels.**

In product choices, information seeking and perceived brand similarities (or differences) have been hypothesised as results of involvement. An individual involved with the decision to buy a product would ideally engage into information seeking to maximise the outcome of the choice. The extent of information seeking would ideally enable him or her to distinguish among brands.

However, in channel choices decision involvement seems not to be associated with information seeking and channel similarity (tables 7.39 and 7.40). Irrespective of whether the respondents are involved or non involved with the decision from which channels to buy, they would seek information. In particular, more than 60% of respondents state that they would seek a lot of information in non-store format choices. Hypothesis 2 is therefore rejected.

Further, the extent of information seeking would assist the respondents to distinguish among channels (hypothesis 10). This hypothesis is rejected on the grounds of the

measurement used for capturing channel similarity. Such a relationship appears to be conceptually acceptable and may hold true where similarity is measured in terms of channel attributes including for example security, convenience or service. Additionally, channel similarity is conceptualised as a result of channel decision involvement. However, given the type of measurement used for channel similarity the fact that hypothesis 3 is rejected is anticipated.

**4. There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and enjoyment in channels<sup>46</sup>.**

Enjoyment (pleasure or hedonism) has been treated in the literature as a dimension of enduring involvement, which appears to cause situational involvement. In adapting this conceptualisation in the channel context, an enduring involvement with a channel would ideally result to channel decision involvement.

The hypothesis testing indicates that such a relationship is possible, since enjoyment in shopping from a retail store and the Internet may be related to channel decision involvement (table 7.43). Given this, hypothesis 4 is partially accepted.

**5. There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and channel loyalty.**

As discussed in chapter 5, in channel choices where the individual is uncertain about the outcome of the choice (i.e. perceives risk), he or she may develop a loyalty to a specific channel for a given product as a way to handle the risk. Table 7.41 indicates significant but at the same time low correlations between channel loyalty and four

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<sup>46</sup> Enjoyment in retail store, catalogue and the Internet appears to be distinct. Thus the three measures are used individually for examining correlation with channel decision involvement.

dimensions of perceived risk. While these values do not confirm a relationship among the variables, they may indicate one. Based on this the hypothesis is partially accepted.

**6. There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and information seeking in channels.**

The hypothesis was based on the idea that where individuals perceive risk in channel choices they are likely to seek information as a way to handle the risk. Given the results of the correlations (table 7.38) the low values do not confirm a relationship however they may indicate one between channel information seeking and store risk, non-store quality risk and defraud risk. The hypothesis is partially accepted.

**7. There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and self-confidence in channels.**

Pearson correlation examines the relationship between channel confidence with 5 channel risk dimensions. However, it is important to highlight that respondents relate channel confidence to catalogue and Internet shopping. For this reason there appears to be no relationship with store risk (table 7.36). Further, correlation values are relatively low which do not confirm a relationship, but rather they indicate a possible one between four dimensions of perceived channel risk and channel confidence. On these grounds, the hypothesis is partially accepted.

**8. There is a relationship between self-confidence in channels and information seeking in channels.**

The rationale of this hypothesis is that in channel choices the more confident the individual is, the less information is sought. However, while such a relationship may have been proven in the product context it appears that information seeking in channels, which is related to non-store formats, has nothing to do with the confidence in channels (table 7.37). The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

**9. There is a relationship between channel loyalty and brand switching.**

As discussed in chapter 5, this hypothesis is based on the idea that variety-induced brand switching may be minimised if variety is sought through the use of multiple channels for buying clothes (channel switching). In this way individuals would satisfy their need for variety and at the same time remain brand loyal. However, given the results in table 7.44, it is evident that there is no relationship between brand switching and channel loyalty.

Further, brand switching is hypothesised to relate to overall channel characteristics (hypothesis 11). Examination of the correlation values in table 7.45 confirms no relationship between brand switching and the channel characteristics. However, there is a small indication of a potential relationship between brand switching and channel involvement, store risk and enjoyment in retail store shopping.

**Table 7.36 Correlation between channel confidence and perceived channel risks**

Correlations		Channel confidence
Channel confidence	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	541
Store risk	Pearson Correlation	-.054
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.210
	N	535
Non-store product quality uncertainty	Pearson Correlation	.369
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	533
Non-store quality risk	Pearson Correlation	.200
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	539
Defraud risk	Pearson Correlation	.124
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
	N	537
Internet risk (product and price)	Pearson Correlation	.220
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	522

**Table 7.37 Correlation between channel confidence and channel information seeking**

Correlations		Channel confidence
Channel confidence	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	541
Channel information seeking	Pearson Correlation	.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.131
	N	536

**Table 7.38 Correlations between channel information seeking and perceived channel risks**

Correlations		
		Channel information seeking
Channel information seeking	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	..
	N	538
Store risk	Pearson Correlation	-.129
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	N	533
Non-store product quality uncertainty	Pearson Correlation	.067
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.121
	N	530
Non-store quality risk	Pearson Correlation	.271
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	537
Defraud risk	Pearson Correlation	.123
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
	N	534
Internet risk (product and price)	Pearson Correlation	.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.736
	N	519

**Table 7.39 Correlation between channel information seeking and channel decision involvement**

Correlations		
		Channel similarity
Channel similarity	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	..
	N	548
Channel decision involvement	Pearson Correlation	.046
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.287
	N	548

**Table 7.40 Correlation between channel similarity and channel decision involvement**

Correlations		
		Channel information seeking
Channel information seeking	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	..
	N	538
Channel decision involvement	Pearson Correlation	.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.171
	N	538

**Table 7.41 Correlation between channel loyalty and perceived channel risks**

Correlations		Channel loyalty
Channel loyalty	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.
	N	551
Store risk	Pearson Correlation	-.166
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	540
Non-store product quality uncertainty	Pearson Correlation	.179
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	538
Non-store quality risk	Pearson Correlation	.146
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	542
Defraud risk	Pearson Correlation	.070
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.103
	N	541
Internet risk (product and price)	Pearson Correlation	.152
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	528

**Table 7.42 Correlation between channel decision involvement and perceived channel risks**

Correlations		Channel decision involvement
Channel decision involvement	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.
	N	555
Store risk	Pearson Correlation	-.073
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.092
	N	542
Non-store product quality uncertainty	Pearson Correlation	.008
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.854
	N	540
Non-store quality risk	Pearson Correlation	.067
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.121
	N	544
Defraud risk	Pearson Correlation	-.039
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.364
	N	543
Internet risk (product and price)	Pearson Correlation	.035
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.422
	N	529



**Table 7.43 Correlations between channel decision involvement and enjoyment in retail store shopping, catalogue shopping and Internet shopping**

Correlations		Channel decision involvement
Channel decision involvement	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.
	N	555
Enjoyment in retail store shopping	Pearson Correlation	.114
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008
	N	541
Enjoyment in catalogue shopping	Pearson Correlation	.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.503
	N	535
Enjoyment in Internet shopping	Pearson Correlation	-.114
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008
	N	538

**Table 7.44 Correlation between brand switching and channel loyalty**

Correlations		Brand switching
Brand switching	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.
	N	557
Channel loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.083
	N	551

Source: SPSS outputs

**Table 7.45 Correlation between brand switching and channel characteristics**

Correlations			Correlations		
		Brand switching			Brand switching
Brand switching	Pearson Correlation	1.000	Brand switching	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)			Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	557		N	557
Channel loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.074	Store risk	Pearson Correlation	-.119
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.083		Sig. (2-tailed)	.006
	N	551		N	542
Channel similarity	Pearson Correlation	.009	Non-store product quality uncertainty	Pearson Correlation	-.093
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.836		Sig. (2-tailed)	.031
	N	548		N	540
Enjoyment in retail store shopping	Pearson Correlation	.162	Non-store quality risk	Pearson Correlation	.011
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		Sig. (2-tailed)	.802
	N	541		N	544
Enjoyment in catalogue shopping	Pearson Correlation	-.010	Defraud risk	Pearson Correlation	-.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.813		Sig. (2-tailed)	.722
	N	535		N	543
Enjoyment in Internet shopping	Pearson Correlation	.013	Internet risk (product and price)	Pearson Correlation	-.039
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.758		Sig. (2-tailed)	.371
	N	538		N	529
Channel decision involvement	Pearson Correlation	.143			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001			
	N	555			

Source: SPSS outputs

**Table 7.46 Summary of hypotheses testing**

Hypotheses	Rejected	Partially accepted
H1: There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and perceived channel risk	✓	
H2: There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and information seeking in channels	✓	
H3: There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and channel similarity	✓	
H4: There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and enjoyment in channels		✓
H5: There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and channel loyalty		✓
H6: There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and information seeking in channels		✓
H7: There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and self-confidence in channels		✓
H8: There is a relationship between self-confidence in channels and information seeking in channels	✓	
H9: There is a relationship between channel loyalty and brand switching	✓	
H10: There is a relationship between channel similarity and information seeking in channels	✓	
H11: There is a relationship between channel characteristics and brand switching	✓	

### 7.5 Testing the conceptual model

As discussed in chapter five, the conceptual model proposes brand switching as a function of optimal stimulation level (OSL), product and channel characteristics. To investigate this relationship the intention is to derive an equation that relates brand switching with OSL, product and channel, using multiple regression analysis. The goal of the regression analysis is to establish a relationship expressed via an equation for predicting the values of the dependent variable (criterion variable) using one or more independent variables (predictors). The simplest equation is that of a linear relationship which is explored in the context of this analysis.

#### 7.5.1 Brand switching as a function of OSL, product and channel characteristics

Three regression models were performed to assess the individual effect of each independent factor on brand switching before considering an overall model. This was done primarily for purposes of parsimony, given the number of the distinct variables (e.g. involvement, perceived risk etc.) composing each factor (e.g. product).

The models were conducted using the 'enter' method. To explore the linear relationship of brand switching with each factor, various statistics were used including descriptives (mean and std. deviation), the  $R^2$  goodness of fit, the standard error of the estimate, analysis of variance (F-statistic and significance), collinearity statistics (tolerance) and the t-statistic.

In addition to establishing the strength of a linear relationship, regression analysis is based on certain assumptions concerning the residuals<sup>47</sup> which are estimates of true errors in regression models (e.g. identify outliers in the dependent variable). In particular, where the model is appropriate for the data, the residuals should follow a normal distribution (with mean equal to 0) and their variance should be constant to avoid heteroscedasticity. Also, there must be no correlation between the residuals (serial or auto-correlation). Any potential violation of these assumptions must be assessed using diagnostic statistics with regard to the suitability of the data. These include histograms and normal probability plots (P-P plots) for assessing the distribution of the residuals and scatterplots to examine the residuals against predicted values of the dependent variable to identify problems of non-constant variance. Finally the Durbin Watson test is used for examining serial correlation.

#### 7.5.2 Model 1 Brand switching (dependent)-OSL (independent)

Pearson correlation values of the OSL variables (n=527) are very low indicating no relationship with brand switching. The correlation coefficient confirms that indeed there is no linear relationship ( $R^2=.015$ ). The standard error of the estimate is almost equal to the standard deviation, which also indicates that the model is not meaningful (table 7.47). In the analysis of variance (table 7.48) the F-statistic is used to test the hypothesis that the coefficients (B) are equal to 0. The value of the F-statistic tends to be higher when the independent variables help to explain the variation in the dependent variable. In table 7.48, F appears to be very low ( $F=1.931$ ) and the

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<sup>47</sup> A residual is the difference between the observed value of the dependent variable and the value predicted by the model.

associated probability ( $p=.104$ ) verifies that a linear relation is not significant. Based on this, the probability that each coefficient equals to 0 is accepted.

To indicate the relative importance of each variable in the model the t-statistic is used as a guide. For the useful predictors the values should range above +2 and below -2. The t-statistic indicates that only one variable (risk stimuli) meets the guidelines (-2.315) although it is not highly significant (table 7.49). In addition, the collinearity statistics indicate the extent of the correlation among the OSL variables, which in this case is minimal given that the tolerance values are close to 1. The variance inflation factors in this case are low which indicate the low variance of the regression coefficients.

Overall, the statistics indicate that there is no linear relationship between brand switching and optimal level of stimulation. However, there is the possibility that the data may not be suitable for a linear model, thus affecting the coefficient values. In evaluating the suitability of the data, the residual statistics indicate a mean of 0 and a normal distribution of the errors (see appendix 3, page 303). In such a case the plotted values fall nearly along the line of the normal probability plot. In addition, to assess the variance of the residuals these are plotted against the predicted value of brand switching. The configuration of the plot indicates no apparent systematic trends, which means that there is no indication of heteroscedasticity.

To identify outliers in the independent variables the leverage statistics are used where the residuals (independent) are plotted against a value which indicates the distance of each case to the mean of all cases<sup>48</sup>. No outliers are identified in the OSL dimensions. Finally the Durbin-Watson test indicates no serial correlation

Given the statistics, it is evident that there is no linear relationship between brand switching and OSL, which suggests that conceptually the two may not be related in the context of clothes.

**Table 7.47 Summary of brand switching-OSL regression model**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.121	.015	.007	.6165

**Table 7.48 Analysis of variance of brand switching-OSL regression model**

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.936	4	.734	1.931	.104
	Residual	198.401	522	.380		
	Total	201.336	526			

<sup>48</sup> There are 2 similar measures, Mahalanobis distance and leverage. In this case the centred leverage value is used.

**Table 7.49 Coefficients table of brand switching-OSL regression model**

Coefficients								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.834	.160		11.481	.000		
	New and unfamiliar stimuli	.678E-02	.043	.018	.393	.695	.872	1.147
	Change stimuli	1.512E-02	.035	.059	1.301	.194	.904	1.106
	Risk stimuli	-5.99E-02	.026	-.109	-2.315	.021	.855	1.169
	Activity stimuli	-2.88E-02	.031	-.043	-.941	.347	.889	1.125

Source: SPSS outputs

### 7.5.3 Model 2 Brand switching (dependent)-product factor (independent)

Correlation statistics of the 9 variables (n=341) composing the product factor show low correlations of brand switching with product variables ranging from .025 (performance risk) to -.307 (importance). These values indicate a possible relationship which is also indicative by the correlation coefficient ( $R^2=.211$  or .190 for the adjusted  $R^2$ ). This means that the independent variables explain 19% of the variability in brand switching (table 7.50). The standard error of estimate compares favourably with the standard deviation value of brand switching (.5823), indicating goodness of fit. Although the F-statistic is not very high (higher than the value reported for model 1) the values of B and associated probability (tables 7.51 and 7.52) indicate that the coefficients are not equal to 0, thus the hypothesis is rejected.

The coefficient values of some variables are relatively close to 0 (e.g. performance risk, psychological risk, appearance risk and indifference). In addition, the p values indicate the significance of the linear relation, however they do not mean that each independent variable contributes to the fit of the model. The values of the t-statistic indicate that interest, performance risk, and psychological risk do not contribute to the model. These variables have also the lowest correlation values with brand switching. Further, the collinearity statistics indicate high levels of tolerance and low VIF values, which imply no multi-collinearity.

In evaluating the suitability of the data, the residual statistics indicate a mean of 0 and a normal distribution of the errors. The plotted values fall nearly along the line of the normal probability plot (see appendix 4, page 305). To assess the variance of the residuals they are plotted against the predicted value of brand switching. The configuration of the plot indicates no apparent systematic trends which means there is no indication of heteroscedasticity. Lastly, the Durbin-Watson test indicates no serial correlation.

The diagnostics regarding the residuals indicate no violation of the model assumptions however, it is imperative to examine the independent variables for any potential outliers (see appendix 4). The figure indicates that there are some outliers (5 cases) that may affect the model fit.



Following this, a new model is derived which excludes the cases identified as outliers and three of the independent variables that do not meet the t-statistic value required (indifference, performance risk, psychological risk). The new model (n=338) indicates some changes in the values of the standard deviation of brand switching (.5848) and standard error of estimate (.5241). In addition there is an increase in the correlation coefficient (adjusted  $R^2$  = .197) and the value of the F-statistic (14.757). Irrespective of the changes in the values, the predictive ability of the product factor has not been improved. Since the correlation coefficient remains very low, the conclusion is that there is no linear relationship between the brand switching and the product factor.

**Table 7.50 Summary of brand switching-product regression model**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.459	.211	.190	.5242

**Table 7.51 Analysis of variance of brand switching-product regression model**

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24.469	9	2.719	9.894	.000
	Residual	91.507	333	.275		
	Total	115.976	342			

**Table 7.52 Coefficients table of brand switching-product regression model**

Coefficients								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient s	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.606	.333		7.834	.000		
	Interest	2.288E-02	.044	.031	.521	.603	.661	1.514
	Importance	-.196	.040	-.290	-4.844	.000	.662	1.510
	Uncertainty	.118	.049	.132	2.399	.017	.785	1.274
	Performance risk	2.759E-03	.041	.004	.067	.946	.713	1.402
	Fit risk	-9.446E-02	.035	-.144	-2.709	.007	.838	1.194
	Price risk	-7.195E-02	.026	-.143	-2.765	.006	.886	1.129
	Psychological risk	-3.297E-03	.028	-.006	-.120	.905	.864	1.157
	Brand similarity	-.164	.039	-.208	-4.149	.000	.939	1.065
	Brand loyalty	.523	.220	.118	2.375	.018	.968	1.033

Source: SPSS outputs

#### 7.5.4 Model 3 Brand switching (dependent)-channel factor (independent)

Correlations values of brand switching with the 11 channel variables are fairly low ranging from -.005 (enjoyment in catalogue shopping) to .165 (enjoyment in retail store shopping). Similarly, the correlation coefficient is lower than the product model ( $R^2=.059$ , adjusted  $R^2=.038$ ) but higher than model 1. It indicates no linear relationship since the channel factor hardly explains 4% of the variability in brand switching. In addition, table 7.53 shows that the standard error of the estimate is almost equal to the standard deviation of brand switching which equals to .6052. Additionally, the F-statistics is very low albeit its significance (table 7.54). This highlights that channel variables do not explain the variation in brand switching. The values of the t-statistic show that only 3 of the 11 independent variables contribute significantly to the model (table 7.55). However, their coefficient values are close to 0.

Examination of the residuals in the dependent and independent variables identifies outliers (4 cases) in the independent variables (see appendix 5, page 307). A new model ( $n=529$ )<sup>49</sup> is derived using the three channel variables that meet the t-statistic value requirements. The new model indicates an adjusted  $R^2$  of .043 while the F-statistic has relatively improved (8.987). In spite of the increase in the F value, the overall observation is that there is no linear relationship between brand switching and the channel factor.

**Table 7.53 Summary of brand switching –channel regression model**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.244	.059	.038	.5936

**Table 7.54 Analysis of variance of brand switching-channel regression model**

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.897	11	.991	2.812	.001
	Residual	172.632	490	.352		
	Total	183.528	501			

<sup>49</sup> Even though the outliers were excluded from the new model, the sample cases have increase due to the reduction of the independent variables used as predictors.

**Table 7.55 Coefficients table of brand switching-channel regression model**

Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.389	.275	5.049	.000		
	Channel similarity	2.997E-02	.021	.065	1.422	.156	.907
	Store risk	-5.540E-02	.039	-.069	-1.435	.152	.839
	Non-store product quality uncertainty	-5.300E-02	.027	-.097	-1.963	.050	.780
	Non-store quality risk	-1.154E-02	.029	-.019	-.402	.688	.879
	Defraud risk	6.041E-03	.027	.010	.227	.820	.953
	Internet risk (product and price)	-1.883E-03	.031	-.003	-.060	.952	.821
	Enjoyment in retail store shopping	6.886E-02	.024	.142	2.896	.004	.801
	Enjoyment in catalogue shopping	-1.034E-02	.027	-.018	-.381	.703	.818
	Enjoyment in Internet shopping	3.384E-02	.027	.064	1.261	.208	.747
	Channel loyalty	4.056E-02	.038	.052	1.062	.289	.787
	Channel decision involvement	4.589E-02	.021	.100	2.203	.028	.936

Source: SPSS outputs

The results of the three regression models indicate that brand switching can be possibly explained to a small extent by the product factor. On the contrary, no linear relationship is found with optimal stimulation level and the channel factor. Given these results, it seems meaningless to examine an overall model of brand switching with the three factors (OSL, product, channel). Indeed, an overall model was derived, with and  $R^2$  of .176 and F-statistic at 3.617 which indicates that the independent variables do not explain any variation in brand switching. Additionally of the 24 OSL, product and channel variables included in the overall model, only 5 appear to have acceptable t-statistic values. This confirms that an overall model is not meaningful.

The focus is therefore shifted towards examining the reasons of why brand switching does not appear to be a function of the OSL product and channel characteristics as proposed by the conceptual model.

#### 7.6 Discussion of the results

From a conceptual perspective, the framework of this thesis receives substantial support from the literature. Initially, brand switching has been argued to be a manifestation of the need for variety, explained by the notion of optimal stimulation level (Raju, 1980; Hoyer and Ridgway 1984). In this respect, individuals with a relatively high need for variety in their lives are expected to show brand switching propensities in their clothes choice behaviour (Raju 1980 and 1981).

On the contrary, from an empirical point of view, the results of the regression analysis (model 1) indicate that brand switching in clothes is not at all related to the respondents' need for variety. This implies that while respondents have a need for variety in their lives, they do not satisfy that need through brand switching in their clothes choices. In other words, the brand switching observed may be the result of other internal factors other than the need for variety.

Indeed, as discussed in section 7.3 (page 221) brand switching in clothes appears to be the result of the inability of the respondents to find the ideal combination of attributes in a single brand. In this case the attributes are style, fit and quality. This is confirmed by two reasons.

First, because the brand name is not an important attribute when shopping, respondents are uncommitted to the brand they prefer and buy the most. Their preference and systematic re-purchase of that brand is motivated by the importance of fit, style and quality. On any given occasion they do not find an acceptable combination of these attributes they are likely to switch. Conceptually, this relates to the notion of brand sensitivity discussed in chapter 3 (page 92). Kapferer and Laurent (1984) argued that a consumer is brand sensitive to the extent that the brand name plays a major role in brand choice. In the context of this research, respondents are not brand sensitive, and therefore are not committed to a single brand.

Second, it is obvious that the brand switching observed is not variety-induced. Had it been purely the result of the need for variety respondents would alternate among brands that are perceived dissimilar. However, this is not the case. Respondents were asked to indicate the degree of similarity among the brands in their preferred set. A percentage of respondents have indicated that they are neutral (or undecided) however, a higher percentage of them reported that their preferred brands are in fact relatively similar among them (table 7.56).

**Table 7.56 Similarity in brands**

Characteristics	Similar (%)	Dissimilar (%)	Neutral (%)
Price	45	23	32
Material (fabric)	46	20	34
Brand image	35	31	34
Fit	51	22	27
Colour	45	18	37
Stitching quality	55	16	29
Style	44	24	32
Care instructions	50	13	37
Overall quality	60	15	25
Fashionability	58	14	28

Source: Adapted from SPSS output

The question is, why would respondents alternate among similar brands of clothes if alternation was motivated by the need for something novel? This reinforces the argument that brand switching in clothes is not motivated by the need for variety, but by other factors. In addition, the extent of similarity of the brands (high, moderate, low) was used to uncover differences among respondents in terms of their brand switching tendency. Results of t-test comparisons indicate that respondents who perceive higher degree of similarity have a higher tendency to switch brands, than respondents who perceive moderate or low levels of similarity. Irrespective of this, no differences were observed in terms of involvement, brand loyalty, and perceived risk, except for the fact that respondents who perceive moderate levels of brand similarity are more concerned with performance risk, than those who perceive high levels of similarity.

Literature suggests that those who perceive high levels of similarity in their evoked set (or preferred set of brands) are likely to switch for the sake of variety (Haung and Yu, 1999). However, given the results of model 1 which suggests no relationship

between brand switching and optimal stimulation level, it is argued that Huang and Yu's proposition depends on the product class.

To sum up, in the context of this research brand switching appears to be the result of factors other than variety-seeking. Respondents' overall need for variety is not expressed through their clothes choices. An explanation may be that respondents (and individuals in general) have a pre-defined and consistent set of the attributes that they look for when they shop for clothes. These attributes may well be style, fit and quality. Therefore their choices are based on these attributes with the sole purpose of maximising them each time they shop for clothes.

The fact that brand switching is not variety-induced, affects its theorising in relation to the product and channel characteristics in the context of this research. Initially, the conceptual framework was based on the proposition that product characteristics mediate the occurrence of variety-induced brand switching. Additionally, variety-induced brand switching would be minimised if the individual could satisfy his or her need for variety by switching shopping channels instead of brands (Menon and Kahn, 1995). However, since brand switching in clothing is not triggered by variety seeking in the first place, these propositions can not be tested. It seems therefore that the conceptual framework does not apply in the context of clothing, which justifies the results of the data analysis.



In spite of this, its operationalisation and the results of the analysis highlight a number of findings that are important in studying consumer behaviour. The sections that follow discuss the findings and reports new ones in optimal stimulation level, product characteristics and channel characteristics.

#### Findings on optimal stimulation level

In examining the degree of respondents' environmental stimulation (OSL) the results support Berlyne's (1960) arguments in that individuals prefer intermediate levels of stimulation. However, consumer behaviour literature treats the notion of OSL as a dichotomous variable (high-low) where individuals with high optimal stimulation levels (OSL) are likely to exhibit a higher degree of exploratory tendencies (e.g. look for variety). The opposite is true, where individuals with low OSL tend to be inert (or variety avoiders). The limitation with this view is that it does not designate the degree of exploratory tendencies in the case where individuals prefer intermediate levels of stimulation. Subsequently, in the context of this research it is not possible to evaluate the degree of variety seeking propensity given the respondents' levels of optimal stimulation.

In examining the dimensionality of OSL, results of factor analysis indicate four distinct factors which correspond to four sources of stimulation including, new and unfamiliar stimuli, change stimuli, risk stimuli and lastly activity stimuli. This interpretation is consistent with Mehrabian and Russel (1974) with the exception of a

fifth factor. Given the results of this research, OSL appears to be a multi-dimensional construct with fairly reliable dimensions.

#### Findings on product and channel characteristics

The analysis of the data reports a number of interesting findings with regard to the product and channel characteristics. The discussion of the results is complemented by additional analysis in an attempt to enhance the understanding of consumer choice behaviour in the context of this research.

From both conceptual and empirical perspectives, involvement is proven to be a multi-dimensional construct. Its investigation in the context of clothing reinforces the concept of importance as a dimension of involvement. Importance has been used in almost all the multidimensional and uni-dimensional operationalisations of involvement in the extant literature (e.g. Lastovicka and Gardner, 1979; Kapferer and Laurent, 1985a; Jain and Srinivasan, 1990; Zaichkowsky, 1985; McQuarrie and Munson, 1986).

The analysis identified a second dimension of involvement, that of interest which merged with the dimension of 'pleasure', even though the two are hypothesised as distinct (Kapferer and Laurent, 1985a). This is consistent with Rodgers and Schneider (1993) in that respondents seem to be interested in clothing because it is pleasurable and thus cannot separate the two. Similarly, Jain and Srinivasan (1990) in their replication of the Kapferer and Laurent scale (involvement-profile) reported that the

interest and pleasure factors loaded together on the same dimension. This seems to contradict the findings of Kapferer and Laurent (1985a, 1985b, and 1986c).

Importance and interest dimensions were derived following the use of oblique rotation which provided a clearer interpretation of the two factors than Varimax. Oblique factors are not expected to be independent because they belong to the same dimension. To examine the extent of their relationship correlation analysis was used which indicates a significant relationship (sig. 2-tail, .000-Pearson .558). Similarly, in examining the correlations among their oblique factors, Kapferer and Laurent (1985c) reported significant relationships.

A number of other items were used to establish the relationship between involvement with knowledge, extensiveness of the information search, perception of differences (brand similarity) and commitment. As discussed in chapter 6, knowledge and commitment are measured by single items derived from Jensen et al, (1989). The extensiveness of the information seeking is measured by a scale of three items (including 'when evaluating clothing I consider a wide range of features' and the two information seeking measures cited in table 6.8) with a low but acceptable alpha value of .53. The scale measuring brand similarity resulted in a high reliability coefficient (.85) as discussed in the data reduction section (section 7.2). These behaviours have been acknowledged by the literature as consequences of involvement and have been used in numerous studies to assess the predictive validity of

involvement (e.g. Zaichkowsky, 1985; Kapferer and Laurent, 1985b, 1985c; McQuarrie and Munson, 1987).

**Table 7.57 Examining the predictive validity of importance and interest dimensions of involvement**

Correlations		Interest	Importance
Interest	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.558*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	557	556
Importance	Pearson Correlation	.558*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	556	556
Extensiveness of information seeking	Pearson Correlation	.230*	.225*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	557	556
Brand similarity	Pearson Correlation	.039	.134*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.362	.002
	N	549	548
Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.170*	.257*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	546	546
Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.279*	.344*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	543	543

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS output

Correlation results indicate significant relationships among the involvement dimensions and their consequences. In addition, the interest and importance dimensions were regressed on the consequences of involvement. The results summarised in table 7.58 indicate the predictive validity of involvement.

**Table 7.58 Interest and importance regressed on the consequences of involvement**

Consequences	Adjusted R -Sq.		Standardised Coefficients			
	Interest	Importance	Interest/Sig.		Importance/Sig.	
Extensiveness of information seeking	.051	.049	.230	.000	.225	.000
Brand similarity	.000	.016	.039	.362	.134	.002
Knowledge	.076	.117	.279	.000	.344	.000
Commitment	.027	.064	.170	.000	.257	.000

Source: Adapted from SPSS output

The results indicate that collectively, the importance dimension seems to have higher R-Sq. and standardised coefficient values, which may indicate better predictive ability than the interest dimension.

Involvement was also examined in relation to brand loyalty, perceived risk, and brand similarity. Correlation analysis indicated significant but at the same time very weak relationships among these variables. This seems to contradict the extant literature which indicates that perceived risk is conceptually related to involvement (Dholakia, 1997). A possible explanation may be that the relationship of perceived risk and involvement depends on the product category examined. Also, the large number of constructs involved in the present research may have hindered this relationship.

Alternatively, perceived risk in clothes may be dependent on the situation. For example, individuals would perceive risk in their choice of clothes only in particular situations such as, when buying something expensive, or for a special occasion, or when they buy for others. In this case, the individual is expected to get involved with the purchase of the product in order to minimise risk. The involvement will subside once the purchase is completed. This type of involvement (situational) is not

examined in the context of this research. The importance and interest dimensions appear to be related to channel decision involvement. Correlation analysis indicates a weak but indicative relationship<sup>50</sup> (table 7.59).

**Table 7.59 Examination of the relationship between product involvement dimensions (importance and interest) and channel decision involvement**

Correlations		Importance	Interest
Importance	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.558*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	556	556
Interest	Pearson Correlation	.558*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	556	557
Channel decision involvement	Pearson Correlation	-.188*	-.149*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	554	555

\*\*.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS output

Examination of differences between channel involved and non-involved respondents in terms of their degree of product involvement indicates significant findings (tables 7.60 and 7.61). Results show that highly channel involved respondents, are also highly involved with clothing (importance and interest). On the contrary low channel involved respondents are less involved with clothing. This may indicate that channel decision involvement derives from enduring involvement with a product.

<sup>50</sup> Relationship is negative only because channel involvement is measured on a scale of 1=low involvement, 5=high involvement, while interest and importance are measured on a scale of 1=high involvement, 5=low involvement.

Individuals who are very interested in clothing and place great importance on how they dress are likely to get involved with the channel decision.

In addition, channel decision involvement may be a result of perceived risk. Correlations indicate a significant relationship of channel decision involvement with product risks but not with channel risks (table 7.62). The results may suggest that respondents become involved with the channel decision in an attempt to minimise the risk they perceive in their clothes choices. Indeed, independent sample t-tests indicate some significant differences between channel involved and non-involved respondents in terms of their perception of risk (tables 7.63 and 7.64). In particular, channel involved respondents are less uncertain about their clothes choices and less concerned about price and psychological risks than non-involved respondents.

Further, the examination of the relationship of channel decision involvement with clothes involvement and risk may suggest that channel decision involvement derives from two sources. First, individuals involved with clothes are encouraged to get involved with the decision as to which channel to use for buying their clothes. Second, individuals appear to get involved with the channel decision to minimise the risk in their product choices. This confirms the situational nature of channel involvement and reinforces the idea that the channel decision should be a part of the conceptualisation of purchase decision involvement (e.g. Mittal, 1989).

Respondents may also handle risks in their product and channel choices by seeking information in channels. In the section 7.4, correlation analysis indicated a relationship between channel information seeking and channel risks. Similarly, channel information seeking seems to be related with product risk, as illustrated in table 7.65.

Independent sample t-tests were used to examine the differences among respondents using the degree of information seeking as a separating variable (low, moderate, high). The results report significant differences between high versus low and high versus moderate channel information seekers in terms of their perceived risks in clothes. Table 7.66 shows that in comparison to low and moderate, respondents with a high degree of channel information seeking are less concerned (on aggregate) about the risks in their product choices. This implies that seeking information in channels may reduce the risks perceived in clothes choices.

Literature suggests that that perceived product risk is related to brand loyalty (Bauer, 1960; Roselius, 1971; Cunningham 1967b), although the extent of their relationship has not been investigated. Brand loyalty is mostly seen as a way to handle risk in product choices. In the context of clothes, a significant but weak relationship was observed between price risk and brand loyalty (-.132). This is because brand loyalty is the direct result of the strong preference respondents exhibit for a particular brand and thus it has nothing to do with perceived risk.



However, perceived risk appears to be related to channel loyalty. Correlation analysis indicates a weak but indicative (i.e. significant) relationship of perceived risk with channel loyalty. To examine their relationship further, independent sample t-tests were conducted which highlight significant differences between channel loyal and non-loyal respondents in terms of price risk levels (tables 7.67 and 7.68). The results indicate that non-channel loyal respondents are more concerned about prices than loyal respondents. In particular, they are concerned about finding clothes cheaper in sales or elsewhere at lower prices. As a result, they appear to alternate among channels for the purchase of their clothes. In fact, frequency distributions indicate that 68% of the respondents use at least 3 or 4 different channels for buying clothes, while only 8% buy from a single channel.

Alternatively, respondents appear to be loyal to a channel as an attempt to minimise channel risk. The relationship between channel loyalty and perceived channel risk was addressed earlier in the chapter (section 7.4 investigation of association). In extending the analysis, a series of t-tests were conducted which indicate significant differences between channel loyal and non-loyal respondents in terms of channel risk. In comparison to channel loyal, non-loyal respondents appear to be more,

- uncertain about the product quality in catalogues and Internet.
- concerned about the possibility of making a poor decision in terms of quality when shopping via a catalogue or the Internet.

- uncertain about the outcome of their choice in terms of the range of clothes and prices when shopping via the Internet.

On the other hand, loyal respondents appear to be more uncertain about the outcome of their choice in terms of the range of clothes, quality, prices and customer service when buying clothes from retail stores.

**Tables 7.60 and 7.61 Independent sample t-tests and group statistics (channel decision involvement and product involvement)**

	t-test for Equality of Means	
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Importance	3.726	.000
Interest	3.037	.003

Channel decision involvement		N	Mean
Importance	totally unconcerned	152	2.6870
	very concerned	64	2.1523
Interest	totally unconcerned	152	2.2780
	very concerned	64	1.8859

**Table 7.62 Examination of the relationship between channel decision involvement and perceived risks in clothing**

Correlations		
		Channel decision involvement
Channel decision involvement	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.
	N	555
Uncertainty	Pearson Correlation	.131*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	555
Performance risk	Pearson Correlation	.080
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.060
	N	551
Fit risk	Pearson Correlation	.058
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.175
	N	547
Price risk	Pearson Correlation	.150*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	551
Psychological risk	Pearson Correlation	.179*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	550

\*\*.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

**Table 7.63 and 7.64 Independent sample t-tests and group statistics (channel decision involvement and perceived risks in clothes)**

	t-test for Equality of Means	
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Uncertainty	-2.491	.013
Performance risk	-1.659	.099
Fit risk	-1.638	.103
Price risk	-2.032	.043
Psychological risk	-3.306	.001

Channel decision involvement		N	Mean
Uncertainty	totally unconcerned	152	2.4496
	very concerned	64	2.7031
Performance risk	totally unconcerned	151	3.6291
	very concerned	63	3.8360
Fit risk	totally unconcerned	151	4.4007
	very concerned	62	4.6129
Price risk	totally unconcerned	152	2.6941
	very concerned	64	3.0703
Psychological risk	totally unconcerned	152	2.7796
	very concerned	64	3.3047

**Table 7.65 Examination of the relationship between channel information seeking and product risks**

**Correlations**

		Channel information seeking
Channel information seeking	Pearson Correlation	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	538
Uncertainty	Pearson Correlation	.120*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006
	N	538
Performance risk	Pearson Correlation	.160*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	536
Fit risk	Pearson Correlation	.132*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	534
Price risk	Pearson Correlation	.066
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.130
	N	535
Psychological risk	Pearson Correlation	.110*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011
	N	535

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS outputs

**Table 7.66 Examination of differences (channel information seeking and perceived risks in clothes)**

Perceived product risks	Degree of channel information seeking		Test for equality of means Sig. 2-tail	Degree of channel information seeking		Test of equality of means Sig. 2-tail
	N=370 High	N=45 Low		N=370 High	N=125 Moderate	
Uncertainty	2.65	2.40	.015	2.65	2.54	.093
Performance risk	3.73	3.32	.002	3.73	3.53	.013
Fit risk	4.48	4.18	.027	4.48	4.25	.007
Psychological risk	3.15	2.75	.017	-	-	-
Price risk	-	-	-	2.99	2.72	.025

Source: Adapted from SPSS output

**Table 7.67 and 7.68 Examination of differences between channel loyal and non-loyal respondents in terms of price risk (test and statistics)**

Independent Samples Test			Group Statistics		
	t-test for Equality of Means		Channel loyalty	N	Mean
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	no channel loyalty		
Price risk	-2.918	.004	channel loyalty	376	2.8285
				170	3.1382

Source: SPSS outputs

Following the analysis and discussion of the results, a number of relationships have been identified, which highlight the role of channel characteristics in consumer product choices. The examination of these relationships reinforces the conceptualisation of the channel characteristics in the context of this research and highlights the contributions to knowledge.

The following chapter concludes the thesis. It outlines the research and focuses on its contributions, limitations and suggestions for future research.

## **8.0 CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

Following the analysis and discussion of the results, this concluding chapter focuses on reiterating the objectives of the thesis, emphasising its key findings and reflecting on its contributions to the discipline of consumer behaviour. In addition it highlights its limitations which represent areas for future improvement, while suggesting directions for future research

In consumer behaviour literature, variety seeking is categorised into three types of behaviour, including purchase exploration (e.g. brand switching), vicarious exploration and use innovativeness (Price and Ridgway, 1982). Much of the research in this area focuses on brand switching as a way of looking for variety in product choices. Various authors have developed models of switching behaviour with the assumption that it is caused by the need for variety (e.g. Givon, 1984; Kahn et al, 1986; Lattin and McAlister, 1985 etc.). As a result, most of these models do not accommodate other causes of brand switching (e.g. external factors).

This limitation in the literature was recognised by Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) who developed a theoretical model which distinguished the need for variety from other causes of brand switching (e.g. decision strategies, out-of stock situations, dissatisfaction etc.) The authors suggested that brand switching is a function of the need for variety and a number of product characteristics, which appear to mediate its occurrence in a particular product class. Subsequently they developed a typology

(discussed in chapter 5) to emphasise that the level (i.e. high-low) of each product characteristic in a given product class is likely to influence the occurrence of brand switching behaviour.

However, the model has not been empirically investigated. The authors suggested that individual and product characteristics may not be "*directly generalizable to the choice of common consumer products*" thus, research is necessary to determine which of these characteristics are important in explaining brand switching in a product choice situation (Hoyer and Ridgway, 1984). Since the model has only been partially tested (Van Trijp et al, 1996), there is no indication as to which product classes the authors' propositions would ideally apply.

The model of Hoyer and Ridgway (1984) was the platform on which this thesis' conceptual framework was developed. This model was chosen because of certain advantages over other alternative models (e.g. Woodside and Clockey, 1975; Givon 1984) including the attempt to 1) conceptually distinguish among the internal and external causes of brand switching and 2) examine the mediating role of various product characteristics on brand switching.

The proposed thesis framework intended to examine the propositions of Hoyer and Ridgway in clothes choices and at the same time extend their work to incorporate the notion of the channel and explore its influence on brand switching behaviour. Over the years, various researchers have emphasised the potential role of the channel in

consumer choices, yet research in this area is seriously limited. However, with the latest proliferation in shopping channels, the role of the channel in consumer choice seems to be even more meaningful and worthy of additional research attention. Based on this, the proposed conceptual framework examines the role of individual, product and channel characteristics in consumer choice behaviour. The overall research objective was to explore the potential influence of the channel characteristics in brand switching.

To achieve this, an extensive review of the literature examines the nature [of] and interaction [among] a number of constructs including variety seeking behaviour, brand switching, involvement, perceived risk, brand loyalty etc. The review helps to establish a conceptual understanding of the interaction among these constructs at the product level, something that was lacking in the work of Hoyer and Ridgway. In addition, it serves as the basis for conceptualising the channel characteristics by adapting existing product theory in a channel context (e.g. channel decision involvement, perceived channel risk etc.). A set of eleven hypotheses (table 8.1) emerged from the literature review which explore the interaction among the channel characteristics in an attempt to 1) enhance understanding of their nature and 2) examine their relationship with brand switching. The development of hypotheses addressing the relationship between individual and product characteristics with brand switching goes beyond the scope of this research, given the existing literature which examines such relationships (e.g. Raju, 1980; Hoyer and Ridgway, 1984; Wahlers et al, 1986 etc.).

**Table 8.1 Research hypotheses**

H1	There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and perceived channel risk
H2	There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and information seeking in channels
H3	There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and channel similarity
H4	There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and enjoyment in channels
H5	There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and channel loyalty
H6	There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and information seeking in channels
H7	There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and self-confidence in channels
H8	There is a relationship between self-confidence in channels and information seeking in channels
H9	There is a relationship between channel loyalty and brand switching
H10	There is a relationship between channel similarity and information seeking in channels
H11	There is a relationship between channel characteristics and brand switching

The thesis framework was operationalised in the context of clothing using a research questionnaire administered on-line (mainly due to speed and cost advantages). The questionnaire was highly structured with standardised responses for greater control. The selection of clothing as the product to be studied, was based on the fact that it is often used in the catalogue shopping literature and is related to key concepts of the framework including involvement and perceived risk. In addition, it is a product category which can be sold successful across many different channels (e.g. Internet catalogues and retail stores) therefore ideally suitable for this research.

The research sample was selected on a number of criteria. Given the method of administration, the sample consists of individuals with Internet access, e-mail accounts and some prior experience with all three channels (Internet, catalogue retail store). Prior to distribution to a random sample of three thousand potential respondents, drawn from the customer database of Next PLC, a pilot testing was



initiated to establish a preliminary indication of expected response rates. The final questionnaire achieved an overall response rate of 19%. The analysis involved a number of techniques for data description (frequencies, cross-tabulations and t-tests), summarisation (factor and reliability analyses), investigating associations among the channel variables (correlation analysis) and finally testing the conceptual framework (regression analysis).

The overall result of the analysis indicates that optimal stimulation level, product characteristics and channel characteristics do not explain brand switching behaviour in clothing. In addition, results of the hypothesis testing are both confirmatory of no relationship among certain channel characteristics and indicative of a possible relationship among others. In particular, of the eleven hypotheses tested, seven are rejected while the remaining four are partially accepted in that they 'indicate' potential relationships (table 8.2).

**Table 8.2 Hypotheses testing**

Hypotheses	Rejected	Partially accepted
H1: There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and perceived channel risk	✓	
H2: There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and information seeking in channels	✓	
H3: There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and channel similarity	✓	
H4: There is a relationship between channel decision involvement and enjoyment in channels		✓
H5: There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and channel loyalty		✓
H6: There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and information seeking in channels		✓
H7: There is a relationship between perceived channel risk and self-confidence in channels		✓
H8: There is a relationship between self-confidence in channels and information seeking in channels	✓	
H9: There is a relationship between channel loyalty and brand switching	✓	
H10: There is a relationship between channel similarity and information seeking in channels	✓	
H11: There is a relationship between channel characteristics and brand switching	✓	

Given these results, one may argue that the empirical evidence raises questions as to the accuracy of the conceptual framework. The fact that the framework does not apply in this context is attributed to the respondents switching behaviour, and is not concerned with the conceptual platform of the framework. The conceptual framework is based on robust analysis of the literature, which suggests a relationship between the need for variety (optimal stimulation level or OSL) and product characteristics and brand switching behaviour (Hoyer and Ridgway, 1984). This is also supported empirically by Ragu (1980) who found a significant correlation between brand switching and optimal stimulation level. Raju (1980) states that,

*"...the results suggest that people who have higher OSLs are generally more likely to manifest exploratory behaviours in the consumer behaviour context. The exploratory tendencies are most likely to be manifested as risk taking and innovativeness somewhat likely to be manifested as brand switching...(p279).*

Raju's results confirm a relationship between brand switching and optimal stimulation level in general, without the effect of the product. Where this relationship is examined in a specific product class, the type of product should explain the variation in the switching behaviour. Besides, brand switching is a product specific phenomenon and therefore it is likely to vary from product to product. This variation derives from the motivations of brand switching and not the observed action itself. It is therefore meaningful to suggest that the motivations of brand switching (i.e. OSL, satiation, etc.) are likely to vary across product categories.

As discussed in chapter 2, there are numerous motivations of brand switching behaviour including internal (e.g. optimal stimulation level, satiation with the product or its attributes uncertainty about future preferences, the attempt to simplify the choice task etc.) or external (e.g. price promotions, discounts, out-of stock conditions etc.). However, these explanations do not account for the role of the product class in determining the occurrence of brand switching and since brand switching is specific to the product, these explanations seem to be limited in scope. As a result, there is a lack of differentiating among the motivations of brand switching across product classes.

In the context of this research brand switching was captured using a number of indicators, not previously used in the literature. Data analysis indicated the particularity of brand switching in clothes choices, which meant that the indicators initially proposed to capture the propensity to switch in clothes, appeared to be inadequate. As a result, brand switching was measured by the degree of importance of the brand name and the extent of the commitment to the favourite brand.

Preliminary results indicated that respondents do not consider the brand name as a significant factor when buying clothes. For this reason, they are uncommitted to the brand they buy the most, albeit their strong preference (driven by the attributes of fit, style and quality). Additional analysis indicates that brand switching in clothes is not the result for the need for variety motivated by optimal stimulation level.

While this reinforces the notion that brand switching is product category dependent, this could not have been anticipated, given the lack of prior empirical evidence. Subsequently, the conceptual model does not appear to apply in the context of this research. This suggests that while respondents have a general need for variety in their lives, it does not affect (or interfere) with their choice behaviour in clothing. It may well affect their behaviour in the purchase of other product classes. In product categories where brand switching is the sole result of the need for variety the conceptual framework may apply. Perhaps, in product categories where the experiential properties (e.g. taste) of a product class are more emphasised, brand switching behaviour may be the result of the need for variety.

Further, the fact that the conceptual model lacks applicability in the context of clothes means that the proposition as to the potential influence of the channel characteristics on brand switching behaviour reveals no relationship. Despite this, additional analysis as to the interaction among channel variables and their relationship with the product characteristics indicates significant empirical findings, which are important in the study of consumer choice.

Overall, given the limitations in the extant literature, the present thesis demonstrates that there is a need for additional research attention in brand switching behaviour. The examination of individual, product and channel characteristics in brand switching behaviour represents an exploratory attempt to extend the knowledge in this area and

a number of contributions have been made, including conceptual, methodological, empirical and practical, which are discussed in the following section.

### 8.1 Conceptual contributions

The thesis makes a genuine contribution to the discipline of consumer behaviour on a number of conceptual dimensions. Initially, the area of study highlights the complexity and confusion which characterises the nature of numerous constructs of consumer behaviour (e.g. variety-seeking, involvement, perceived risk, brand loyalty etc.) let alone their interaction.

The literature review of this thesis (chapters 2 and 3) represents an original attempt to deal with disperse literature with the purpose of providing a 'synthesis' of complex concepts that establishes an understanding of their nature and interaction in consumer behaviour. These concepts represent the core elements of a model of purchase exploration (Hoyer and Ridgway, 1984) whose propositions have been partially tested only once (e.g. Van Trijp et al, 1996). This model has been used in the context of this research as the conceptual basis for developing the thesis framework, with the objective to extend the original model to the notion of the channel [and its characteristics]. This perhaps represents the most critical contribution of this thesis to the literature of consumer behaviour.

Although the potential role of the channel in consumer choice has been recognised in the literature no prior research attempted to investigate its influence on brand

switching behaviour. A number of channel characteristics have been conceptualised for this purpose by adapting existing product theory including **channel decision involvement**, **perceived channel risk** and **channel loyalty**. These conceptualisations represent a genuine contribution to the discipline of consumer behaviour, and are discussed in the following sections.

#### Channel decision involvement

The conceptualisation of 'channel decision involvement' is original. It emphasises the need to examine the channel in the involvement literature and extend the existing conceptualisations of 'purchase decision involvement' to include the channel decision (e.g. what channel to use for the purchase of a particular product class).

Extant conceptualisations of involvement with the purchase decision (e.g. Mittal, 1989) involve product dimensions including for example perceived risk, brand similarity and product importance. However, as discussed in chapter 4, most often the choice of the channel precedes the choice of the product, in the sense that consumers often choose the store (or catalogue or Internet site) prior to their choice of product or brand. It is therefore emphasised that the channel decision may be an inherent dimension of purchase decision involvement.

Channel decision involvement refers to the extent to which an individual is concerned with the channel decision for the purchase of a product and is defined as,

*"The extent of interest and concern that a consumer brings to bear upon a channel-decision task".*

Channel decision involvement is situational (and therefore temporary) in nature, possibly resulting from perceived risk in product or channel choices. In other words, an individual becomes involved with the channel decision in order to maximise the purchase outcome (and at the same time handle risk). The involvement is likely to subside once the choice has been completed. Additionally, it may be the result of enduring involvement with the channel, [although this has not been investigated in this research]. Enduring involvement may refer to the on-going relationship of an individual with a given channel, without a purchase action being necessary. Activities that may denote enduring involvement with channels are window-shopping and catalogue or Internet browsing.

#### Perceived channel risk

Extant literature on perceived risk examines risk in retail patronage as a situational variable. This means that researchers add the parameter of the 'channel' to examine its implications in the choice of products (e.g. Cox and Rich, 1964; Spence et al, 1970 etc.). As discussed in chapter 3, conceptual definitions of perceived risk highlight two dimensions that of the uncertainty and consequences with regard to the attributes of a given product class (e.g. Cox and Rich, 1964).

However, in this research, perceived risk is looked at exclusively in a channel context, which suggests that risk which derives from channel attributes. The rationale

is that, in choosing channels, individuals may perceive uncertainty with regard to the outcome of their choice of channel and its potential consequences. For example in choosing the Internet for clothes purchases, the individual may be concerned about the security of the channel. In this case the uncertainty and consequence dimensions may be conceptualised in terms of channel attributes. Perceived channel risk is therefore defined as

*"The amount of risk a consumer perceives in the choice of a shopping channel".*

This is the first attempt in the literature to approach perceived risk in channels in this way. It is therefore unclear whether the existing classifications of perceived risk (discussed in chapter 3) in various types including for example financial risk, performance risk, social risk etc. (Jacoby and Kaplan, 1973; Roselius 1971) apply in a channel context. This in turn highlights the need for further research in this area to identify types of perceived risk in channels.

#### Channel loyalty

The notion of channel loyalty [in the context of this research] refers to *"the propensity of the individuals to utilise a particular channel for the purchase of a particular product class"*. One of the most common examples of Internet channel loyalty is perhaps the purchase of books on the Internet (e.g. amazon.com). Channel loyalty is conceptualised as a bi-dimensional concept including both a behavioural and an attitudinal dimension. In this respect, individuals are likely to exhibit a commitment



(or consistency) in their use of a given channel if that use is the result of certain benefits offered by the channel (channel attributes). Alternatively, if their use of the channel is motivated by product attributes then there is no commitment. For example, individuals may shop for clothes via the Internet for a number of reasons (e.g. convenience, speed of ordering, prices and discounts available, fun and entertainment). Those individuals, who buy clothes from the Internet because of low prices, are not expected to exhibit a commitment towards the Internet (consistent use). They are likely to shop around and use different channels in order to find the lowest prices available (channel switching). On the other hand, the individuals who buy via the Internet because of convenience or any other channel-oriented attribute are likely to exhibit a consistent use of the Internet. Of course, this will depend on the product category, the channel and the availability of that product via that channel.

Further, the concept of channel loyalty may relate to that of perceived channel risk and other characteristics. To investigate such relationships a number of original hypotheses [new to consumer behaviour] were developed which focused on the interaction among channel characteristics and their relationship with brand switching. This represents an original attempt to adapt existing product theory to investigate channel characteristics [and their interactions] and integrate them in the existing model of Hoyer and Ridgway (1984).

**Table 8.3 Conceptual contributions to consumer behaviour**

- A synthesis of complex concepts with the objective to enhance understanding of their nature and interaction.
- The use of a model which has been partially tested only once.
- The extension of the model to include the notion of the channel.
- The conceptualisation of channel characteristics which are new concepts in the literature.
- The development of hypotheses, new to the literature, to investigate the interaction among channel characteristics and their relationship which brand switching.

### 8.2 Empirical contributions

The empirical contributions of the present research are numerous. They include the findings derived from the testing of existing theories and propositions which confirm (or otherwise) the extant literature, and the findings reported by the present analysis which represent an original contribution to knowledge.

With the operationalisation and testing of the conceptual model, the research has tested certain propositions of the Hoyer and Ridgway model, with regard to brand switching behaviour, for only the second time in the literature since 1984. The findings highlight that brand switching is not the result of variety-seeking behaviour (motivated by optimal stimulation level). This confirms, to some extent, that brand switching behaviour varies across product categories in terms of its motivations.

The operationalisation of certain constructs in the context of clothing emphasises a series of interesting findings with regard to their nature and nomology. Initially, the analysis indicates that optimal stimulation level is a multi-dimensional construct with

fairly reliable dimensions, capturing four sources of environmental stimulation. The interpretation is consistent (to some extent) with the original scale (Mehrabian and Russel, 1974). Respondents' optimal stimulation levels appear to support Berlyne's proposition that individuals prefer an intermediate level of environmental stimulation. Correlation analysis indicated no relationship between the brand switching and optimal stimulation level, which contradicts previous results. This indicates that in the context of clothing, respondents propensity to switch appears to be motivated by their inability to find the ideal combination of style, fit and quality in a single brand of clothes. As a result, they appear to alternate among a set of preferred brands. In this respect, the motivation is internal, however it has nothing to do with optimal stimulation level.

The examination of involvement in the context of clothing using a multi-dimensional scale indicated two oblique factors. Oblique rotation was used by previous research (Jain and Srinivasan, 1990; Kapferer and Laurent, 1985c) which emphasised that involvement factors cannot be independent from one another. Additionally, in the analysis the pleasure and interest dimensions loaded to one factor (interest). While this contradicts the results of Kapferer and Laurent, it is consistent with Jain and Srinivasan (1990) and Rogers and Schneider (1993). This means that respondents can not find clothing interesting without it being pleasurable. Involvement with clothes was also found to correlate with extensiveness of the information processing, knowledge and commitment to a brand. The results confirm the predictive validity of involvement emphasised by the extant literature.

Involvement with clothes was also examined in relation to perceived risk, brand loyalty and brand similarity. Results indicate no relationship with perceived risk, which contradict the extant literature. However, this highlights the fact that their conceptual relationship may not be supported by empirical results across all product categories. In other words, it is dependent on the product category used. Similarly, no relationship has been identified with brand loyalty or brand similarity.

The analysis highlights further empirical findings with regard to the channel characteristics and their interaction with product characteristics. Specifically, channel decision involvement has been found to relate to the interest and importance dimensions of involvement with clothes. Such a relationship may imply that channel decision involvement derives from involvement with clothes. In fact, t-tests indicate that respondents who are highly involved with the channel decision are also highly involved with clothes. Therefore, it may be argued that enduring involvement with clothes is likely to encourage involvement with the decision as to which channels to use for the purchase of clothes (channel decision involvement). Channel decision involvement may also be the result of perceived risk in clothes. This finding indicates that individuals become involved with the channel decision in order to minimise the risk they perceive in their choice of clothes.

Overall, the analysis indicates that channel decision involvement may derive from two sources, depending on the situation and possibly the product class. This reinforces the conceptualisation of channel decision involvement as a situational and

temporary phenomenon. In this context, channel decision involvement appears to have the same antecedents as purchase decision involvement (or situational involvement). This implies a similarity between the two types, which reinforces the idea that the channel decision should be a dimension of purchase decision involvement.

Further, findings indicate that seeking information in channels may reduce the risks individuals perceived in their clothes choices. It appears that channel information seeking is a risk reduction strategy which individuals can employ to handle uncertainty in clothes choices. Perceived risk in clothes has been found to relate to channel loyalty. Results indicate that respondents with no channel loyalty are more concerned about price risk, than channel loyal respondents. Specifically they are concerned with finding clothes cheaper in sales or elsewhere at lower prices. In doing so, they appear to alternate among channels. This finding is important in that it explains why individuals switch channels for the purchase of clothes. Individuals who are motivated by low prices do not exhibit a consistent propensity to use a particular channel for the purchase of clothes. Rather, they alternate among different channels to find the lowest possible price. Alternatively, individuals are loyal to a particular channel for the purchase of clothes in an attempt to minimise perceived channel risk associated with, the uncertainty about the clothes quality, the possibility of making a poor decision in catalogues and the Internet and the uncertainty about the outcome of their choice in terms of range of clothes and prices (when buying on the Internet).

Furthermore, correlation analysis indicated that four of the eleven hypotheses proposed are partially accepted which reinforces the possibility of some relationships among various channel characteristics. In particular, results indicate a relationship between self-confidence and information seeking in channels with perceived channel risk (H1 and H3). This may imply that individuals, who are self-confident in shopping from various channels, perceive less risk and as a result seek less information. Results also indicate a relationship between channel loyalty and perceived channel risk (H7) which, as discussed above, may suggest that respondents exhibit a consistent use of a channel in order to handle the uncertainty perceived in channel choices. Lastly, channel decision involvement appears to be related to enjoyment in channels (H9). This may indicate that channel decision involvement is motivated by the enjoyment individuals derive from channels. In addition, if enjoyment is a dimension of enduring involvement with a channel then, a relationship between enduring channel involvement and channel decision involvement may exist.

Through a number of empirical findings which add to the knowledge of consumer behaviour (table 8.3), the present research demonstrates that the notion of the channel and channel characteristics is meaningful and related in the consumer choice of clothes. It is therefore worthy of research attention in an attempt to uncover its potential role in consumer choice behaviour.

**Table 8.4 Empirical contributions to consumer behaviour**

- Brand switching in clothes is not variety-induced. This confirms that brand switching motivations vary across product classes.
- Brand switching in clothes is not a function of optimal stimulation level and product characteristics. Rather, it is the result of the inability of individuals to find the ideal combination of fit, style and quality in a single brand of clothes. For this reason individuals appear to consider numerous alternatives when shopping for clothes.
- The role of the brand name in the choice of clothes appears to be unimportant. Individuals may not be sensitive to brands of clothes.
- Individuals become involved with the channel decision. Channel decision involvement appears to result from enduring involvement with clothes and perceived risk in clothes choices.
- Information seeking in channels may be used as a strategy to handle perceived risk in clothes choices.
- For the purchase of clothes, individual alternation among different channels is motivated by the attempt to find the lowest prices available.
- For the purchase of clothes, individual loyalty with a particular channel is motivated by the attempt to minimise risk in channel choices.

### 8.3 Methodological contributions.

The contributions of the present research in terms of the methodology derive from the development of an instrument to measure channel characteristics as well as the use of Internet as the survey medium.

First, the idea of channel characteristics is a new notion in consumer behaviour and therefore any attempt towards its operationalisation is new to the literature. For this reason, the development of an instrument to measure channel characteristics is seen as a genuine contribution to the discipline of consumer behaviour. Based on the thesis framework and the conceptualisations of the channel characteristics [by adapting existing product theory], a number of items were developed to measure channel

decision involvement, channel perceived risk, channel loyalty, channel similarity and enjoyment in channels (hedonism). These items are completely new to consumer research and represent a good starting point in investigating the nature (e.g. dimensionality) of the channel characteristics (e.g. perceived channel risk).

Second, literature highlights the wide-ranging advantages of the Internet as a marketing research tool, although Internet questionnaires are not very popular among researchers. A number of reasons seem to explain this. Initially, at the moment, there is very limited literature on Internet as a survey medium (Dibb et al, 2001) and therefore its effectiveness as a research tool remains untested. As a result researchers are concerned about speed of responses, costs and response rates.

With regard to speed of response and the costs associated, there is a general agreement that the Internet is the fastest survey medium and most inexpensive in comparison to other mediums such as interviews, and conventional mail (Churchill, 1999; West 1999). However researchers are concerned with the normal response rates for Internet questionnaires which has yet to be established (West, 1999).

In the context of this research, a combination of the world wide web and e-mail was used for designing and distributing the questionnaire, for greater transmission speed and control over the questionnaire layout. The speed of response was extremely fast, with 41.3% of responses received the same day as the transmission and 90% received in 168 hours of the questionnaire transmission. Response rates mounted to 19% just below Dibb et al (2001) who examined the effectiveness of e-mail as a survey



medium. The authors reported a 22% response rate with a response return of 44% on the same day as transmission.

The use of Internet questionnaires indirectly examines the effectiveness of the Internet as a marketing research tool. On the basis of speed of response and costs this research reinforces existing literature which highlight speed and cost advantages. Further, it highlights that the use of Internet questionnaires for samples similar to the one used for this research is appropriate. As a survey method, Internet questionnaires may also facilitate access in companies' databases in that they ensure confidentiality of customer records and at the same time minimise the effort and cost involved in marketing research.

**Table 8.5 Methodological contributions to consumer behaviour**

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The development of an instrument to measure channel characteristics.</li><li>• The use of Internet questionnaires which examines the effectiveness of the Internet as a survey medium.</li></ul> |
|--|

#### 8.4 Practical contributions

The notion of brands is very important in marketing. After all, marketing involves the differentiation among alternative products using brands. Without them, consumers would perceive products as identical and buy on the basis of price or convenience. Through branding, companies encourage consumers to develop preferences and systematic re-purchasing for particular products (e.g. loyalty). The notion of brands is

therefore an important part of the consumer choice process and its examination in a given product class enables marketing managers to assess the success of their brands. The present research highlights significant findings, with marketing implications for the clothing sector. Examination of various aspects of the respondents' choice behaviour has indicated how individuals behave towards brands when they shop for clothes. The following discussion emphasises a number of practical implications including,

- Importance of the brand name itself in comparison to other aspects of the brand (e.g. quality, style and fit).
- Consumers' tendency to think about brands of clothes collectively as groups and not as individual brands.
- Consumers' purchases of a portfolio of clothing brands. Brand differentiation and evidence of 'trade-off behaviour'.
- Consumers' use of multiple channels for shopping for their clothes.

Before discussing the above themes a brief summary is presented to remind the reader of the relevant key findings. Results indicate that when shopping for their clothes respondents consider at least three or four alternative brands in terms of style, fit and quality, which they rank as the three most important factors. These alternatives appear to constitute a set of brands (e.g. consideration set or evoked set) which respondents perceive as relatively similar and buy frequently. At the same time, respondents show a preference and a systematic repurchase pattern towards a specific brand, which they

denote as their favourite. However, they appear to be uncommitted to that brand and happy to choose an alternative. Further, in terms of channel usage, 68% of respondents report that they use at least three or four different channels for the purchase of their clothes. These respondents [compared to those who use one or two channels for their clothes purchases] appear to be more 'price conscious', in the sense that they are more concerned about finding clothes cheaper in sales or elsewhere at lower prices.

So what are the important implications for retail managers in assessing their brand strategies?

Initially, it appears that the brand name (in this case Next) is the least considered factor when respondents shop for their clothes. Instead, respondents look for an ideal combination of style, fit and quality in their preferred brand, however, if they don't find it they are likely to switch. This does not mean that the brand name is not an important factor, rather it may indicate that respondents are experienced shoppers and extensively familiar with the brand. Because of their experience respondents may feel 'safe' (or certain) about the brand name which they perhaps 'equate' with other attributes, those of style, fit and quality.

Respondents seem to think about brands of clothes collectively as a group and not as individual brands. If Next and its direct competitors were to be categorised in a group on the basis of price and quality the group would represent the upper-middle range of

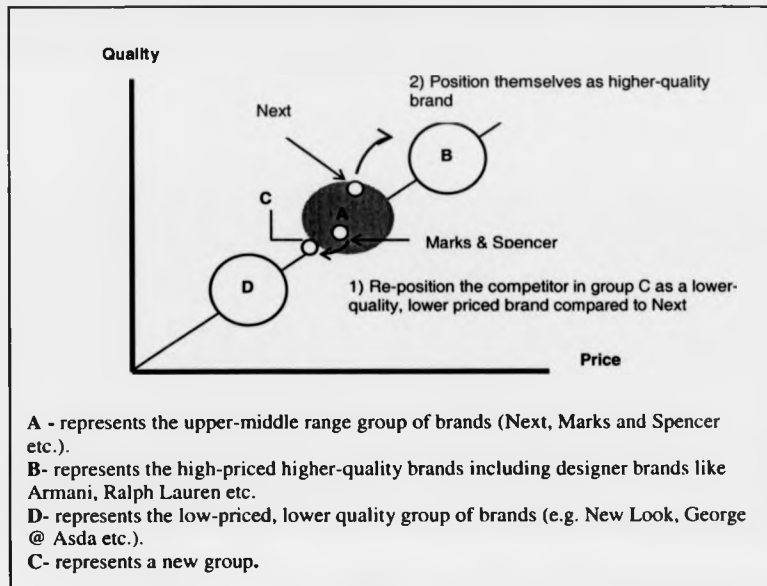
clothes. Within this group the brand name does not appear to have the same importance as style, fit and quality. However the importance of the brand name in choosing clothes would probably be higher if a brand from the upper-middle range group (e.g. Next or Marks and Spencer) was to be compared with other brands from different groups (e.g. George @ Asda, or designer labels such as Armani and D&G). For Next Plc this means that the company has two different 'branding problems'. First, when competing with direct competitors within the upper middle range group (e.g. Marks and Spencer) Next should consider the style, fit and quality aspects of its brand as opposed to the brand name itself. Second, when competing with brands from other groups, the brand name should probably receive greater attention. This has also implications for the direction of the promotional activity of Next Plc in terms of its differentiation strategy in the industry. In particular, Next should emphasise (promote) the brand name of its clothes as a basis for differentiation when competing with lower-priced brands (e.g. New Look). At the same time, it should focus on the quality, style and fit of its brand when competing within the upper-middle range group with brands like Marks and Spencer, Dorothy Perkins, Burton etc.

Further, the findings indicate that respondents are likely to alternate among brands which are perceived as relatively similar, particularly in terms of price, material, fit, colour, stitching, overall quality, style, care, and fashionability. It appears that it is important for the individuals to find the ideal combination of attributes they are looking for even if it means that they have to [on some occasions] give up their preferred brand. This suggests that respondents engage in a 'trade-off' type of

behaviour (which may explain the lack of brand commitment) when they shop for their clothes, considering a portfolio as opposed to one or two brands. In addition, this also suggests that the preference which respondents exhibit for their favourite brand is based on the fact that it meets their choice criteria. This preference is not sustainable, it may decline any time the brand stops meeting the individual choice criteria.

The fact that individuals are able to associate a number of relatively similar brands [which represents their consideration set] may have significant commercial implications for brand positioning. When companies develop positioning strategies, they should perhaps consider associating their brands with other groups of brands. In the case of Next and the upper-middle range group, the company needs to associate its brand with the competition (e.g. Marks and Spencer) and constantly monitor the image of its own brand in relation to the competitors' brands within the group. Of course this suggests that Next will be affected by how consumers perceive its competition. For example, in the case where one of Nexts' direct competitors, (e.g. Marks and Spencer) is seen as lowering its prices [and hence quality], Next might be perceived by its customers as expensive. To overcome this situation Next should perhaps emphasise the higher quality of its brand [in relation to Marks and Spencer] and hence 1) re-position the competitor in a lower-quality, low-price group (group C- see figure 8.1) or 2) position themselves as a higher-quality brand (towards group B- see figure 8.1). If this scenario was to be depicted in a basic two dimensional (price-quality) configuration of 'value', then the illustration would look as follows.

Figure 8.1 The 'value' scenario



The results of the research have also indicated the lack of differentiation among brands in the clothing sector. Prior branding literature suggests that one basis of differentiation is the brand [name] itself, which represents a name, symbol or design (or a combination of these) used to distinguish among alternative products. A brand should promote feelings of confidence and superiority with the ultimate purpose of achieving differentiation and commitment to a brand. Commitment to a brand is a key to a sustainable advantage over one's competitors. It is the psychological attachment to a particular brand within a product class, which will lead to brand loyalty (Traylor, 1981). A brand loyal customer may switch to an alternative where the preferred brand

is unavailable, however, the brand-committed will delay the purchase until s/he finds the brand.

However, the present research highlights that individual levels of brand commitment are seriously low. In fact, only 14% of respondents appear to be committed to their preferred brand. This lack of differentiation and hence commitment to a brand may be explained by the type of research sample and hence the clothing sector used for conducting this research. The research sample represents the segment of shoppers who mostly buy a portfolio of brands from the upper-middle range group (e.g. Next, Marks and Spencer, River Island etc.). Compared to other shopper segments, upper-middle range brand buyers buy on the basis of style, fit and quality. For this reason, they perceive low brand differentiation. On the other hand, designer-brand (high-price, high quality) shoppers seem to attach great importance to the brand name and thus willing to pay the premium price which most often accompanies designer brands (e.g. Valentino, Armani etc.). It is fairly obvious that shoppers engage in a 'trade off' type of behaviour which may be also influenced by their choice of channel for purchasing clothes (e.g. retail store, catalogue, Internet).

In the context of this research, respondents appear to use multiple channels for the purchase of their clothes. Their usage is not motivated by the need for variety rather, it appears to be the result of perceived risk in terms of prices. Because respondents buy on the basis of style fit and quality and perceive low differentiation among brands when they shop, they are concerned about finding clothes cheaper in sales or cheaper

elsewhere. In order to deal with this uncertainty [with regard to prices] they appear to use multiple shopping channels for the purchase of their clothes. Given this, it is perhaps possible to consider that individuals progress through the stages of the buying behaviour process using different channels for specific stages. For example, individuals may use the Internet to gather information about particular garments while buy those garments from a retail store. Similarly, in other occasions individuals may browse retail stores for information while buy from a catalogue or the Internet. Various factors may explain this alternation among channels which is perhaps associated with the benefits of each channel. On some occasions the benefits of a shopping channel (e.g. Internet) appear particularly attractive to individuals, however on other occasions they do not. This may suggest that, the use of a specific channel at a specific stage of the buying behaviour process is in fact a situational phenomenon. In some instances [and for particular reasons] individuals may wish to place an order on the Internet while in other instances they may choose the phone. Their choice of channel at the time may well be random or explained by certain factors. Because these factors are currently unknown in the literature it may be important for companies to realise the implications of extending their operations in various shopping channels. Most clothing retailers [including Next Plc] have already done so, through catalogue the Internet and digital television. Since the use of multiple channels appears to be unrelated to the need for variety and hence has no effect on consumer brand switching, maintaining operations in multiple channels may be considered as a competitive strategy. Two things are achieved including, the



expansion of the market size by reaching new customers and the accommodation of the needs of existing customers.

In attempting to expand the market size by reaching new customers [via the Internet or digital TV] for the sole purpose of gaining market share a company indirectly encourages the use of multiple channels for the purchase of clothes. The result being the consumers' alternation of channels throughout their buying process. This is true for Next Plc. A large percentage of its customers appear to alternate among different channels. It is not clear whether these customers are new or existing customers who previously shopped via the catalogue operation. It is therefore necessary for Next Plc to determine whether its Internet operation is seemly effective in reaching new customers and thus increasing market share or is 'cannibalising' its catalogue operation. Of course this also depends on the long term-strategy of Next which may involve 1) maintaining both operations (Internet and catalogue) or 2) the gradual replacing of the catalogue operation by the Internet.

**Table 8.6 Practical contributions to retail managements**

- Individuals consider style, fit and quality when they shop for clothes which they seem to 'equate' with the brand name.
- Individuals consider a portfolio of brands when they shop for clothes. This may have implications for companies in terms of brand positioning.
- Low differentiation among brands which leads to low brand commitment.
- Evidence that Individuals engage in a "trade off" type of behaviour.
- Use of multiple channels when shopping suggesting that individuals progress through the stage of buying behaviour using different channels.

The present research makes a number of significant contributions to the discipline of consumer behaviour. Based on an exploratory attempt to examine the role of the channel and channel characteristics, it has combined an extensive amount of literature to understand the nomology of various constructs. It conceptualises a number of concepts, new to consumer behaviour, and develops hypotheses with regard to their interaction. Through the use of an Internet questionnaire, it indicates that the Internet is a fairly effective survey medium in terms of response rates, speed and control. Empirical analysis highlights a number of significant findings, which demonstrate the potential role of the channel and its characteristics in brand choice behaviour and which appear to have numerous implications for the companies in the clothing sector. Overall, this research contributes to consumer behaviour in that it stimulates new directions for future research in many areas of consumer choice (such as involvement, perceived risk, channel patronage etc.).

#### 8.5 Limitations and suggestions for future research

A number of limitations are highlighted in the context of this research, which involve the conceptualisation and operationalisation part of the thesis. Initially, it is acknowledged in the literature that the limitations, complexity and confusion surrounding concepts like involvement, perceived risk, brand loyalty, brand similarity and hedonism [which are key elements in this thesis] undermine their empirical treatment. There is no exception for the present research.

While the objective of the literature review (chapters 2 and 3) was successfully achieved in providing a clear understanding of the nature and interaction among complex concepts, their operationalisation in the context of this research represents an area for future improvement. Limitations stem from the use of existing measures for operationalising product characteristics. A major fact is that consumer researchers seldom question the validity of their measures (Peter, 19749). For example, in measuring perceived risk, Stern et al (1977) emphasised that the majority of perceived risk measures appear to be problematic. Similarly, Dawling (1986) suggests that many of the current measures of perceived risk are suffering from validity and reliability problems, because authors fail to address them. The same applies to almost all areas [relevant to this thesis] including involvement and brand loyalty.

Various deficiencies are also highlighted in the area of channel characteristics where the lack of extant literature in channel choice threatens their conceptualisation, and subsequently their operationalisation, in the context of the present research. For this reason, their conceptualisation has been based on existing theories of product characteristics adapted in a channel context. Such an approach represents a good starting point in exploring channel characteristics never the less it inherently undermines their understanding. The 'danger' in adapting product theory to conceptualise channel characteristics is that all the shortcomings of various product theories (e.g. unresolved debates about dimensions etc.) are inherently shifted in a new area. For example, contradicting views in the involvement literature including issues of dimensionality (uni-dimensional or multi-dimensional), type of measures

used (Likert-type or semantic differentials), type of involvement captured (situational or enduring or both), whether the measures are specific to a product class or generalisable to many product classes, are likely to be raised where involvement is adapted in a channel context. This automatically creates problems for future theory development in the area of channel patronage.

The conceptual limitations of channel characteristics naturally influence their operationalisation in the context of this research. A number of items (new to the literature) have been developed based on the conceptualisation of channel characteristics. The shortcomings derived from the difficulties and restrictions encountered during the item-generation and measure-development process of the research. Due to the lack of literature certain concepts have been excluded including channel commitment and enduring channel involvement. These concepts are undoubtedly important for understanding channel loyalty and channel decision involvement and although excluded in this research, they deserve further attention since they stimulate new directions for future research. Overall, because of the lack of existing empirical evidence the empirical treatment of channel characteristics in the context of this research represents perhaps a major deficiency of this thesis and hence, a significant area for future improvement.

Further limitations also arise from the number of constructs involved in this thesis. The conceptual framework highlighted various product and channel characteristics whose operationalisation in the context of this research included a large number of

measures (consisting of 99 items). Given the large number of items, it may be suggested that the findings of the analysis have been undermined, in the sense that conceptual relationships among constructs have not been empirically supported. It is therefore logical to consider that, the reason why the thesis conceptual framework seems not to apply in the context of clothes be merely attributed to the number of items used for its operationalisation. Had the number of items been reduced prior to the administration stage of the questionnaire, findings may have been different. Such an opportunity was missed during the pilot stage of the questionnaire. The responses received from the pilot testing of the questionnaire (60) could have been used as a preliminary insight of the data analysis with the objective to exclude unnecessary items. Such an approach could have made a significant difference in the current findings.

Differences in the findings would have been also observed if a different approach to the research sample was used. For example, 1) where consumers were approached (in the form of a focus group) in an attempt to gain their insights prior to the development of a questionnaire and 2) where the profile of the sample was restricted to those respondents that buy only from a single channel (store-shoppers, catalogue-shoppers, Internet-shoppers). However due to the lack of control over the research sample such limitations become apparent.

In addition, the research sample is not a true probability random sample, in that each population element does not have an equal chance of being selected (Churchill,

1999). It is a cluster sample, where its elements have as a common characteristic the fact that they are customers or potential customers of Next PLC. This type of sample was selected on the basis that its characteristics should meet the objectives of the research. These included 1) respondents with access to the Internet and e-mail accounts [since the research instrument was administered by e-mail] and 2) shopping experience with the three channels used in the context of this research (store, catalogue and Internet). In order to accommodate these requirements the research sample came from a company's database of customers.

Despite the fact that it is not a true probability sample, the research sample was drawn randomly from a large database of e-mail addresses (144 thousand e-mail addresses) and after examination of non-response bias it [sample] appears to derive from a single population (see appendix 2, page 302). For this reason, 'major' differences across respondents were not expected.

#### Suggestions for future research

Among the contributions of this thesis to the discipline of consumer behaviour is the fact that it stimulates directions for future research in new areas of consumer choice previously overlooked. A number of suggestions are highlighted.

The review of the literature on variety seeking behaviour and brand switching reveals the limitation in distinguishing brand switching motivations across product classes. While there is considerable literature in modelling brand switching (e.g. Givon 1984;

Kahn et al, 1986, Lattin, 1987 etc.) most researchers have failed to acknowledge the various sources of brand switching (internal and external). This emphasises the need to consider that individuals switch brands for other reasons than variety seeking. Since these reasons are likely to be product specific, future research should focus on examining brand switching motivations across multiple product classes with the objective of perhaps establishing a basis for generalisation. Such a basis can be then used to cluster product classes [and hence individuals] and proved useful in other areas of marketing such as segmentation.

A number of channel notions were explored in the context of this thesis, which require additional research attention, in terms of examining their nature and interaction with other characteristics. This may suggest a re-evaluation of extant conceptualisations to accommodate the role of the channel in consumer choice. An example may refer to the re-examination of the existing conceptualisations of 'purchase decision involvement' (e.g. Mittal, 1989), with the objective to include the notion of the 'channel decision'. Similarly, researchers may explore the applicability of existing perceived risk classifications (e.g. Jacoby and Kaplan, 1972; Roselius, 1971) in various channels (e.g. catalogue etc.) or attempt to derive new risk dimensions from various channel attributes. Future research may also focus on the conceptualisation of those channel characteristics excluded in the context of this research (e.g. channel commitment, enduring channel involvement) or other completely new characteristics which may extend the understanding of the notion of the channel.

Further, channel characteristics may be examined in relation to product characteristics [something that has been addressed in this research to some extent], with the objective to develop research hypotheses about their interaction and possibly relationship with brand switching. This may also represent a good attempt to apply the model in a different product class.



## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix 1-The Arousal Seeking Tendency of Mehrabian and Russell (1974), chapter 6, section 6.3.1, page 148.

Appendix 2-Examination of non-response bias. A series of independent sample t-tests conducted for 44 variables (optimal stimulation level and product involvement), chapter 7, section 7.1, page 190.

Appendix 3-Residual statistics for regression model 1 (brand switching-optimal stimulation level), chapter 7, section 7.5.2, page 238.

Appendix 4- Residual statistics for regression model 2 (brand switching-product), chapter 7, section 7.5.3, page 241.

Appendix 5- Residual statistics for regression model 3 (brand switching-channel), chapter 7, section 7.5.4, page 244.

**The Arousal Seeking Tendency (AST) Scale (Mehrabian and Russel, 1974)**

1. I seldom change the pictures on my walls
2. I am not interested in poetry
3. It is unpleasant seeing people in strange and weird clothes
4. I am continually seeking new ideas and experiences
5. I much prefer familiar people and places
6. When things get boring, I like to some new and unfamiliar experience
7. I like to touch and feel a sculpture
8. I don't enjoy doing daring foolhardy things for fun
9. I prefer a routine way of life to an unpredictable on full of change
10. People view me as quite an unpredictable person
11. I like to run through heaps of fallen leaves
12. I sometimes like to do things that are a little frightening
13. I prefer friends who are reliable and predictable to those who are excitingly unpredictable
14. I prefer an unpredictable life full of change to a more routine one
15. I wouldn't like to try the new group therapy techniques involving strange body sensations
16. Sometimes I really stir up excitement
17. I never notice textures
18. I like surprises
19. My ideal home would be peaceful and quiet
20. I eat the same kind of food most of the time
21. As a child, I often imagined leaving home just to explore the world
22. I like to experience novelty and change in my daily routine
23. Shops with thousands of exotic herbs and fragrances fascinate me
24. Designs and patterns should be bold and exciting
25. I feel best when I am safe and secure
26. I would like the job of a foreign correspondent of a newspaper
27. I don't pay much attention to my surroundings
28. I don't like the feeling of wind in my hair
29. I like to go somewhere different nearly every day
30. I seldom change the décor and furniture arrangement at my place
31. I am interested in new and varied interpretations of different art forms
32. I wouldn't enjoy dangerous sports such as mountain climbing, airplane flying or sky diving
33. I don't like to have lots of activity around me
34. I am interested only in what I need to know
35. I like meeting people who give me new ideas
36. I would be content to live in the same house the rest of my life

- 37. I like continually changing activities
- 38. I like a job that offers change, variety and travel even if it involves some danger
- 39. I avoid busy, noisy places
- 40. I like to look at pictures that are puzzling in some way

# Appendix 2

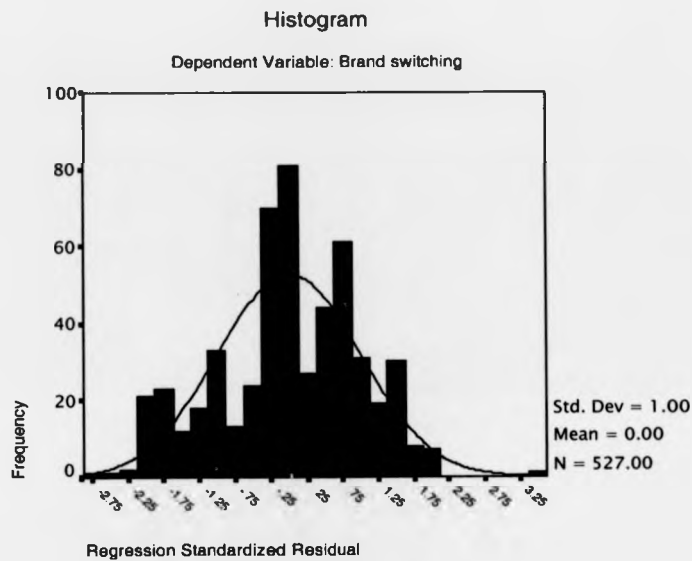
## Examination of non-response bias

Independent sample t-tests for optimal stimulation level and product involvement variables (SPSS output).

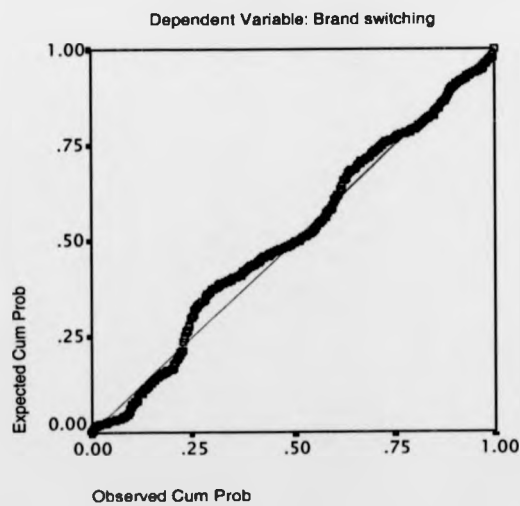
	t-test for Equality of Means	
	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
It gives me pleasure to shop for clothes	.080	.936
I can think of instances where a personal experience was affected by the way I was dressed	-.315	.753
Because of my personal values, I feel that clothing ought to be important to me	-.061	.952
I enjoy buying clothes for my self	-1.170	.242
I rate my dress sense as being of high importance to me	.534	.594
Clothes help me express who I am	.770	.442
I attach great importance to the way people are dressed	-.210	.834
It is true that clothing interests me a lot	.487	.626
The kind of clothes I buy do not reflect the kind of person I am	-1.882	.060
I buy clothes for the pleasure they give me not others	.315	.753
Clothing is a topic about which I am indifferent	-1.596	.111
Clothing is not part of my self-image	-1.000	.318
Relative to other products, clothing is the most important to me	.493	.622
Buying clothes feels like giving myself a gift	-.597	.551
I am not at all interested in clothes	-1.371	.171
osl1: I actively seek new ideas and experiences	-.986	.325
osl2: People wearing strange or weird clothing make me uncomfortable	.486	.627
osl3: I prefer familiar people and places	-1.179	.239
osl4: I am not interested in poetry	-1.249	.212
osl5: When things get boring I look for new and unfamiliar experiences	-2.135	.033
osl6: I like to touch and feel a sculpture	-1.160	.247
osl7: People view me as quite an unpredictable person	-.952	.342
osl8: I do not like to run through heaps of fallen leaves	-.609	.543
osl9: I sometimes like to do things that are a little frightening	-.457	.648
osl10: I like to shop around	.382	.703
osl11: I prefer friends who are reliable and predictable	-1.917	.056
osl12: I prefer an unpredictable life full of change to a more routine one	-2.443	.015
osl13: I don't like surprises	-.453	.651
osl14: My ideal home would be peaceful and quiet	.708	.479
osl15: I eat the same kind of food most of the time	-1.440	.151
osl16: As a child, I often imagined exploring the world	-.564	.573
osl17: I hate window shopping	.266	.790
osl18: I like novelty and change in my daily routine	-2.654	.008
osl19: I am happiest when I feel safe and secure	-1.368	.172
osl20: I do not pay much attention to my surroundings	.869	.385
osl21: I like to go somewhere different nearly every day	-1.545	.123
osl22: I do not like to have lots of activity around me	-.854	.393
osl23: I am interested only in what I need to know	.457	.648
osl24: I like meeting people who give me new ideas	-1.369	.171
osl25: I would be content to live in the same house the rest of my life	-1.955	.051
osl26: I have no interest in fashion	-.929	.353
osl27: I like a job that offers variety and travel even if it involves some danger	-1.824	.069
osl28: I avoid busy, noisy places	-.937	.349
osl29: I would not enjoy risky sports such as mountain climbing or sky diving	-1.178	.239

**Regression Model 1 Brand switching-Optimal stimulation level**

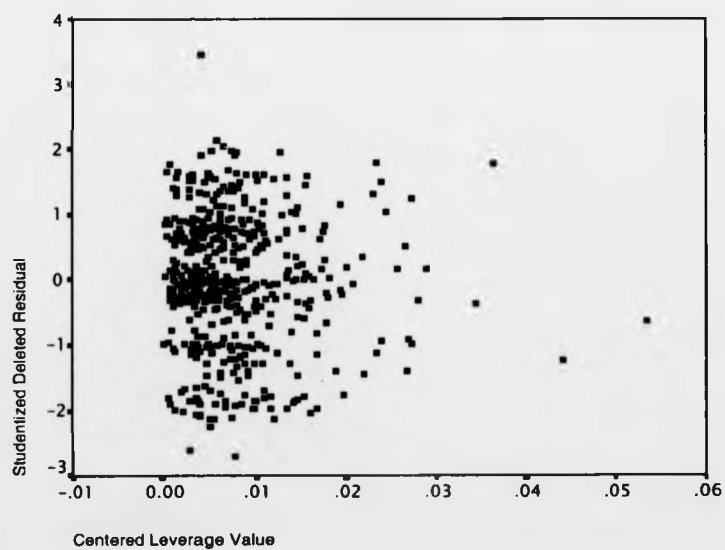
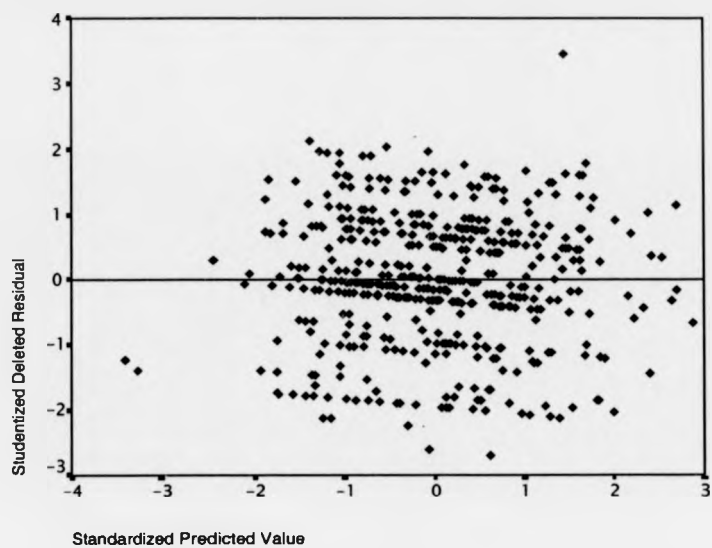
Residual analysis of dependent variable



Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

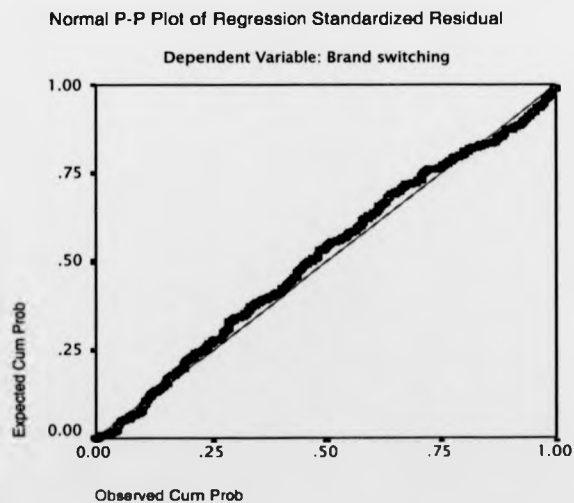
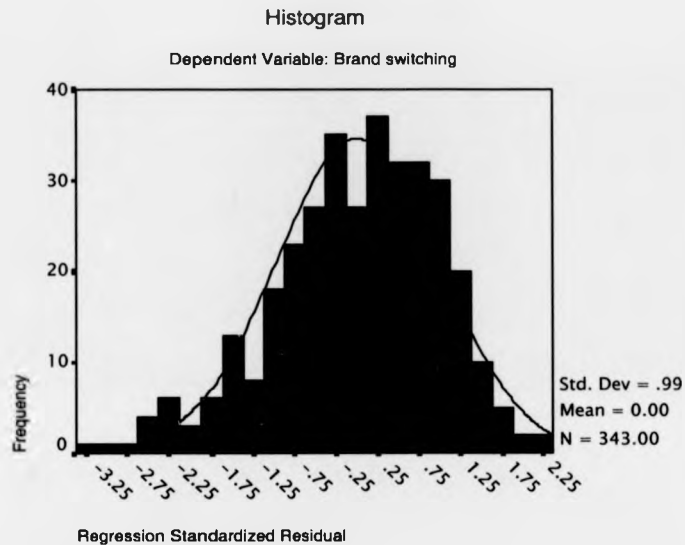


# Residual analysis of independent variables

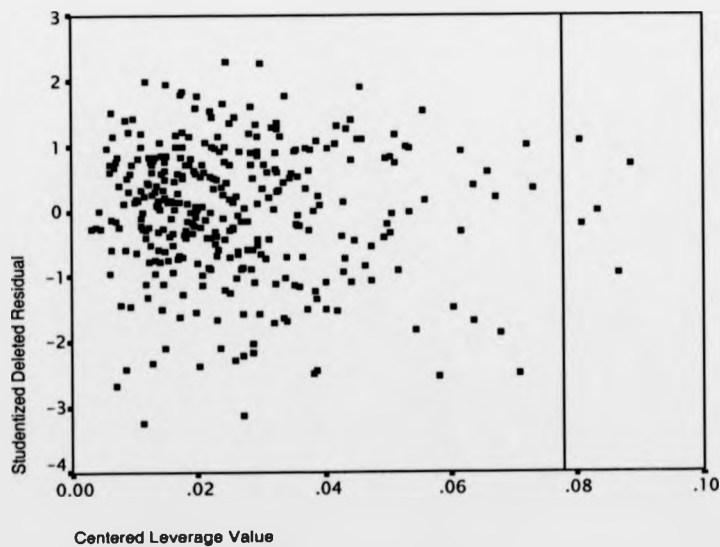
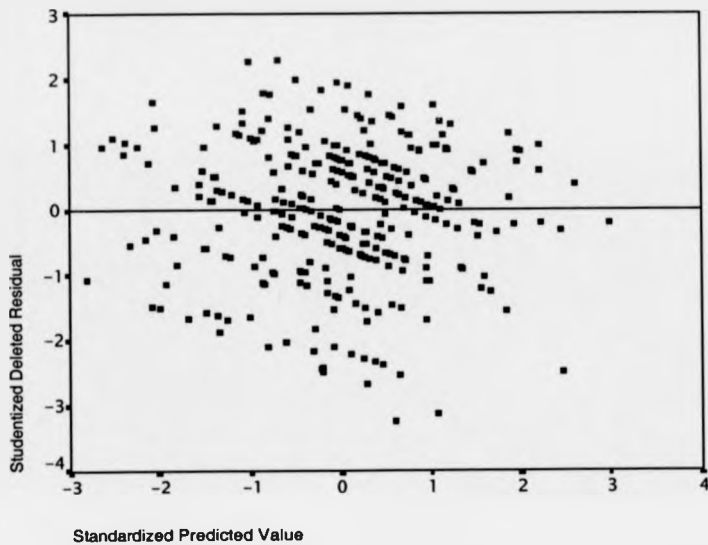


**Regression Model 2 Brand switching-Product factor**

Residual analysis of dependent variable



# Residual analysis of independent variables

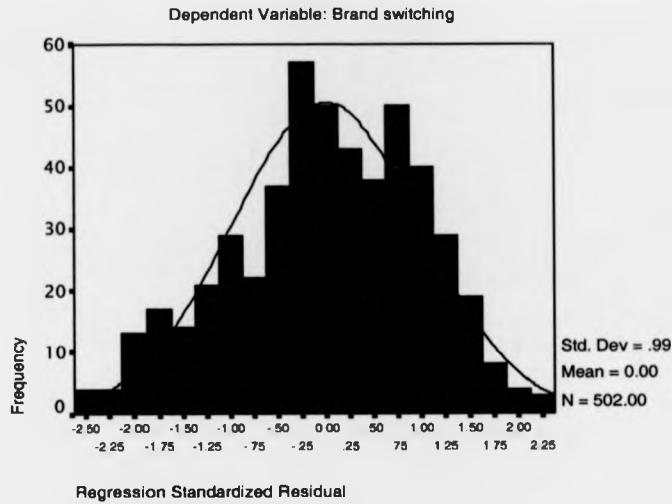




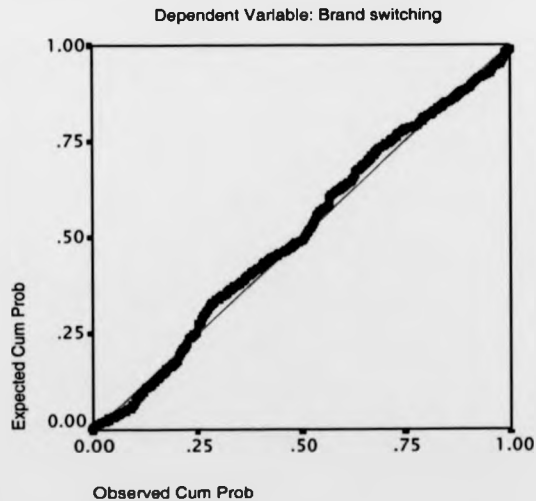
**Regression model 3 Brand switching-Channel factor**

**Residual analysis of dependent variable**

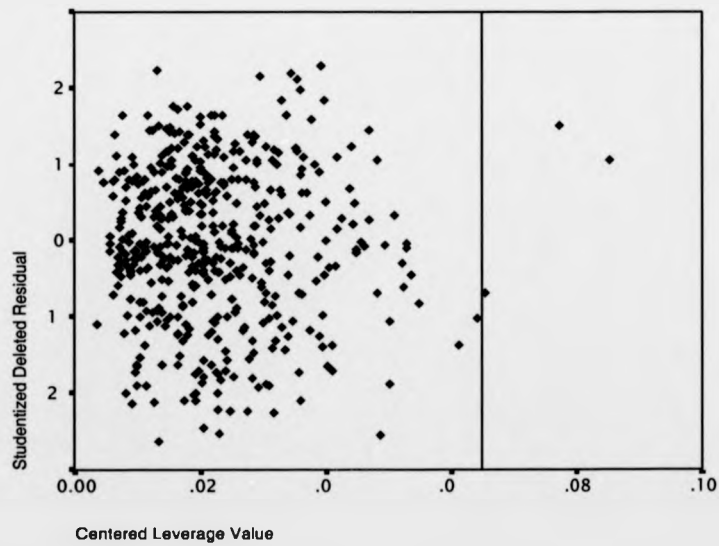
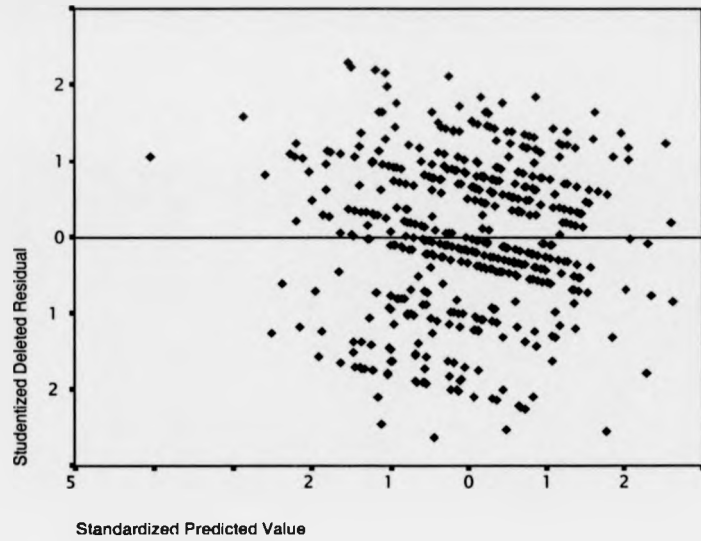
**Histogram**



**Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual**



Residual analysis of independent variables



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